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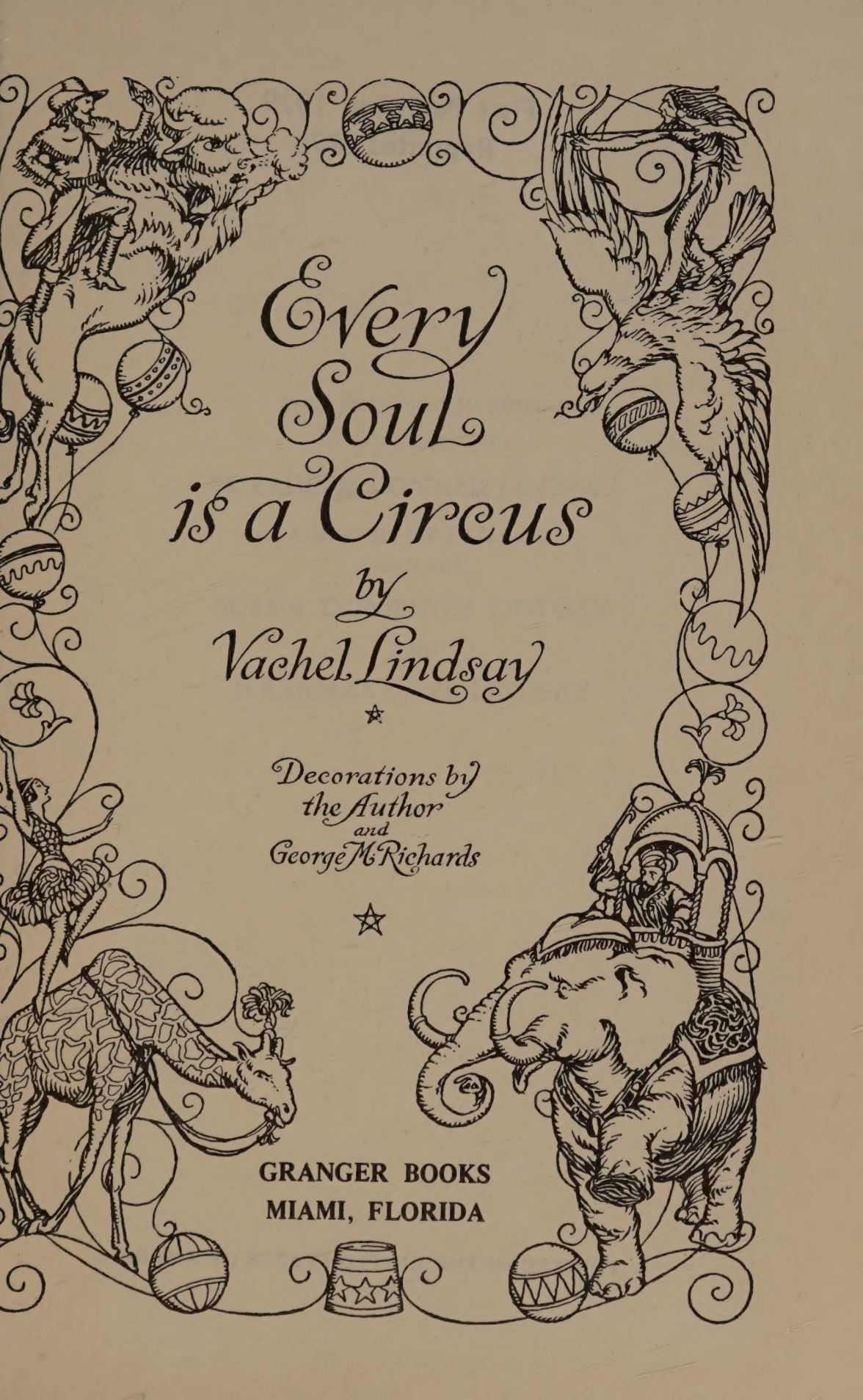
Lindsay, Vachel

Every soul is a circus

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Every Soul
is a Circus



Every Soul is a Circus

by
Vachel Lindsay



*Decorations by
the Author
and
George McRichards*



GRANGER BOOKS
MIAMI, FLORIDA

First Published 1929
Reprinted 1976

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

THIS BOOK IS INSCRIBED
TO MY DEAR WIFE
ELIZABETH CONNER LINDSAY
AND OUR TWO SMALL
CIRCUSES
SUSAN DONIPHAN LINDSAY
AND
NICHOLAS CAVE LINDSAY

Every Soul is a Circus appeared in "Poetry," Oct. 1, 1928, also in the Kansas City "Star" in an earlier form.

The Virginians appeared in "The American Mercury," July, 1928.

A Christ Child Book in "McCalls," Christmas, 1927.

The Mohawk in the Sky appeared in "Palms," 1927.

Many of the Spokane Poems in "The Spokane Chronicle" uncopyrighted.

The Chipmunk appeared in "Pan," etc.

I want to thank these various publications most heartily for the honor of their first printing, and for the permission to reprint.



MOTTO FOR THE WHOLE BOOK

Every soul is a circus,
Every mind is a tent,
Every heart is a sawdust ring,
Where the circling race is spent.



INSCRIPTION FOR THE ENTRANCE TO A BOOK

DEAR PARENTS:

This is a book for precocious children, twelve or fifty years of age. All mothers admit their youngsters are precocious. They are right. The budding human race does not stay that way because of false grammar school education. I leave this statement general, so that every educator can agree with me, however he may differ from his neighbor educator on the details.

Ten years hence I want a group of precocious first voters, twenty-one or twenty-two years of age, to be my fast friends. I want the youngest younger generation along with the oldest older generation and here stake out my claim. I want some of those first and last voters to put me in as Mayor of Loami, Illinois. The only way to get votes is to sit in the hotel

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lobby and hand people your card with your picture on it, and be appallingly frank about it. This book is my card.

Precocious children of any age are teachers. They teach the rest of the world all it ever learns or forgets. Here you will find a fraternal poem for young Marquis De Talleyrand, and one for twelve-year-old Horace Mann, one for some infant T. B. Macaulay, one for Confucius, and one for the young Jennie Lind, and the young Harriet Beecher Stowe, and the young Sacajawea, and the next Carrie Nation, and the next Frances E. Willard, and the next Anthony Comstock, and the next François Rabelais, and the next John Brown, and the next Artemas Ward, and the next Robert E. Lee, and the next Robert G. Ingersoll, and the infant Jean Jacques Rousseau, and the next Phillips Brooks, and all the rest that are coming, including the next Methusalem. See Table of Contents.

Badly as they conduct themselves, my words behave better than I do. Dear Parents, it is easier for me to set an example for your young than my young. As I write my naughty boy and girl, whose traits are utterly inexplicable, are raising awful Ned in the next room, here in this house where I was born. I wish someone would indite them a new book with such strong, refreshing, fraternal language in it that they would sneak behind the haymow with it for half a day. Dear other parents, on the other side of the world, that I have never met, you have the same wish, and here I try to fulfill it for you.

Do you know that Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn were forbidden to the infants of their day, till it was dis-

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covered that to give those two books to the young was one way of keeping them quiet? Then it was that little Rollo died. Huckleberry Finn and Tom Sawyer were the principal pallbearers.

And here is *my* wreath for the mossy, ivy-clad tomb of little Rollo.

In my more helpless infancy when I was seven years old, I had a public library card, but the dour old librarian would not let me take out anything but Jacob Abbott's Rollo books. I read them all. Also one Lucy book, which I found at home, blistered with my mother's infant tears, which she had read in her day. Now in the fiftieth year of my age comes my revolt. I come roaring forth with a book which is the opposite of little Rollo and little Lucy.

We must admit that to counterbalance Rollo our grandmothers had McGuffey, politics so hot that most any man would be arrested for talking that way now, selections from Jefferson and the revolutionary forefathers, red speeches from Edmund Burke in defense of the American rebels, long orations skinning Aaron Burr to a fare-you-well, and going into that love affair with the wife of B. on the island in the west in a way that must have provoked infant curiosity. Then there was the fiery reply of young Pitt to Walpole on being accused of being a young man. A certain amount of hot stuff was allowed. Then there was Spartacus to the Gladiators that won every oratorical contest in its day until it had to be debarred. These memories of old McGuffey read in my grandmother's attic when I was a child, under the dusty pictures of George and Martha Washington, give me cour-

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age for the United States precedent of plain speech with children.

My old art school chum, George Mather Richards, collaborates at every point in this volume. I furnish the rhymes, and this preface. I sneak in a few of my better hieroglyphics and then he illustrates the book all over the shop. He designs it, paper, print and all.

That is the way we planned to work together away back in 1905. We have been hoping to put it over ever since. I know I cannot draw. So does he. But just the same we patiently studied art together for years and years. We ran a studio on West 57th Street one winter, where he furnished the pictures and I furnished the conversation. He has two great talents. He can fill a whole studio full of masterpieces of his art and he has more varieties of conversational silence than any other man I ever met. He is a Plymouth Rock (born in Washington, D. C., with charming irrelevance). I am a Virginian born in Springfield, Illinois, with the same charming irrelevance. He has returned to Connecticut. I have returned to Springfield, Illinois, to the house where I was born, from Spokane, where I had five glorious years.

Our friendship is an anacronism, but if it stands the strain of this volume, the reconstruction period is over. The south has eaten crow, and the stars and bars are temporarily furled, at least in the studio. Anything he has not liked in this book or this preface he has marked out.

So do not consult the poet about further changes in the work. Make them yourself. If there is anything in this

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book, dear parent, that you in your magnificence deem too strong for little Willie or little Susie, or Methuselah, mark it out or tear it out before handing it to them.

That is the way the book censorship societies and the Hollywood movie saints treat books and movies for you. Pass on the noble gesture. Transmit it to the tender and sheltered generations. Let them also feel the touch of volunteer, amateur, uninstructed authority, and watch how they like it.

As for me, what I want is peace without victory.

This is a book for Tom-boy girls and goshawful boys, as I said, a book for precocious children. Find the top commanders in any department of the United States from college presidents to railroad presidents and you will often find those who read the fundamental works in their profession before twelve years of age. There is not a biography in the world but is full of queer books the kid read before twelve, sometimes they were just terrible books, like the Greek Classics in the original, which were plain tough in some parts, and are still translated with dots and dashes, in the ponies used in the universities.

And now for more serious discourse. As Longfellow says, and as Robert Frost so aptly quotes:

"A boy's will is the wind's will.

And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

This book of mine is aggressive, however sinful, and full of pride. If they do not like aggressive verse at twelve, they never will. Not that all of this text is controversial. Far from it. But

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I choose to be serious when I please. I do not believe in simpering with twelve-year-olds as though they were two-year-olds, if they are by any means readers. Of course I like to punish wicked and dull and annoying twelve-year-olds by simpering at them in conversation till it is a positive torture for them and they leave the room for keeps and all. But even bad children indulge in good jokes when they have left the room. Parents indulge in what they think are exquisite, high-minded jokes when the children have left the room. It is hard to tell who is the wittiest. Notice, if you have the self-control, when you are talking down to your progeny in a moment of excitement, and you pause for a reply they talk down to you. The joke is on you.

Yea, all parents use what they think is very strong, subtle Henrik Ibsen language of the wild duck variety when the children are asleep. All the children use very strong and subtle and devil's disciple Bernard Shaw language when the older people are off on an alleged picnic. Why not get together in this matter? All parents shamelessly, unblushingly and blatantly use very poetical and passionate language when they are sure the children are absent. All children use even better poetical and passionate language when the parents are absent. Why not get together in this matter? And now for an even more serious discourse.

If this book is for twelve-year-olds and Methuselahs of a precocious turn, some of them will be high-school freshmen in a few months, eventually if not now.

I have had a hand in a high-school freshman class in the dancing of poetry in the Lewis and Clark High School of Spokane. This was done with the help of Miss

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Edith Haight of the Physical Education staff, now head director of Physical Education, University of Wyoming, Laramie.

Many other Spokane groups have helped in the special Spokane development of the Poem Games. Stoddard King, the poet, and Lenore Glen, the actress and dancer, have for two seasons developed the idea for us. With their help we entertained passing artists who were going on to proclaim our gospel to the ends of the earth. We have been gratified to receive press clippings from Scotland and England discussing the games and speculating upon them. It is no doubt that this general work by Miss Glen and Mr. King has greatly helped to give wide impetus and ambition to the high-school experimenters and helped in their conquest of the town. Of all this, more will be said elsewhere, at great length.

But the class of Miss Haight is my special theme now. She has proved that anything that seems to be poetry to the listener can be danced by him while it is read to him. Her group has danced many things from Shakespeare to Coleridge, also the more rhythmic moderns like Lanier and Poe and Swinburne. Tennyson's bugle song became instantly an improvised ballet, as a group marched abreast from side to side of the room.

There is only one rule: Leave out all musical instrumentation and singing. To elucidate: leave out thumping, drumming, and musical notation and any imitations of singing, and orchestras. Elaborate reading is what is required, reading that comes to the edge of a chant without having the literary meaning clouded by the chant.

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The solo dancers developed a talent for inspired improvising of poems they had never heard of before they stepped to the dancing floor. The soloist improviser stands in the middle of the floor and the reader sits on the side lines. The improviser is instructed to keep one-half a second behind the meter of the reading and dance one syllable at a time, thinking only of the music of the poem and not the meaning. It becomes writing in the air. The second time through, novel and beautiful rhythms are discovered in established but neglected poems, and the dancer often produces remarkable tableaux, rising into realistic acting.

Setting poetry to music, even the best music, is the destruction of poetry and the production of an amorphous and confused result. All poetry that has been set to music has been blasted thereby.

On the other hand, poetry carefully read and set to dancing is recreated, made social and troubadourish, raised from the dead golden treasuries into life again.

The high-school freshman dancers went through four stages this season. The first stage they were so used to thumping their feet when they danced that they liked only poems in which they could impersonate ponies and buffaloes, and their feet were but drums on the floor. In short, they stripped music of everything that had been held over from a bad past and left only the drums.

In the second stage, the drums disappeared. They had forgotten even the lightest thump on the piano keys, which they had used for dancing in former days. After all, the piano is only one kind of a drum, and poetry read like the

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best piano playing is choppy and nippy. The rhythm of the most seemingly regular poetry should be like a stream, and the seeming surface rhythms are only emerging stepping-stones near the river bank, which the landscape gardener has put there at regular intervals.

Sometimes the music of poetry is a subterranean stream, as in the caverns "measureless to man" in Coleridge's *Xanadu*. Entering upon this second stage they were listening for the subterranean river. They learned to float on their feet till not a foot-fall could be heard as they swept from end to end of our apartment, like butterflies, dancing only the ripples that lie between the beats that are scanned in poetry. The readers learned also to control and ignore the mere march-tune of the poems and read for the subterranean river under the rhyme. In this stage they did Coleridge's *Kubla Khan* with splendid pageants in motion. There are forty musical schemes in that poem, all different, none of them drum tunes or piano tunes, all blended like a magic carpet, on which they seemed to float to Cathay.

In this period we did Swinburne's couplet:—

"All the feet of the hours that sound as a single lyre
Dropped and deep in the flowers with strings that flicker
like fire."

Third stage. As a result of the discovery of this secret rhythm, even in the most casual reading of verse, our little butterflies became too æsthetical and floated around in dissolving views, after the manner of all bare-foot dancers the world over that have not themselves in hand. They were

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cloudy little beauties luxuriating in their own sufficient selves and whirling scarfs around, but getting no further into the mysteries than downy chicks. You have all seen groups in movie news films doing this in parks and have said, "Very pretty," and let it go at that.

Fourth stage. Toward June they became literary people. This was the goal. Their faces had the look of writers, not of performers. They were writing in the air with great seriousness and precision. This was natural, for they were all volunteers from the English classes, not picked in any sense. They were merely the students who cared enough for poetry to try to dance it.

Individually they were what society queens would call extremely awkward. This was natural, because it was the awkward age, but it is the most fluent age also, and the body is almost a river, more of a river than a tree. In groups they became friezes and storms, and every gesture harmonized. What one lacked in one rhythm, three others supplied at that point, so four awkward children made a graceful army. A simple line of Lanier they found had a hundred rhythms in one, and an acting possibility that came out of the literary rather than the dramatic instinct.

Yes, in the fourth and last stage, toward June, these children, with the look of writers on their faces, the passion of literature in their hearts, were confidently on the edge of discovery. They rushed rapidly through all sorts of improvising of the classics of British and United States poetry, with that sharp listening expression on their faces. They abandoned themselves to a new kind of printed page on

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which they, themselves, were the twenty-six letters of the alphabet, the forty or more sounds of the English language, the thousand separate syllables which make up poetry.

Pick your poem game dancers for their marks in English and their disposition to write little rhymes without urging. They will write well with their own awkward little bodies in a year. They will be no more worried or ungraceful about it than boys playing baseball as hard as they can. Each dancer developed her own style of improvising, discovered the one poet she could do best. I was delighted to free the idea from my own work and to prove out that it applied to any rhythmic writing. We looked up the precedents in history, which are many, for this kind of expression all the way back to the Greek Tragic Dance.

In this fourth and last stage the students tried composing couplets as they went along. The composer would stand in the middle of the floor and the leader on the side lines would say, "Compose and dance a couplet at the same time on . . . 'The Beach Tree,' or 'April,' or 'Indians,' or on 'Graduation,' or on 'Discovering a Mountain.' " The couplet was forthcoming and the dance at the same time, with slow, unbroken stateliness, the word and the gesture at the same moment springing from the great deep. This was an action of the sub-conscious stream, well worth while, a thing clairvoyant. I recommend it to parents tired of psycho-analysis. It goes further back than the whirling dervishes of Arabia. And please study the footnote, page xxvi.

A couplet is, after all, only two lines long and the composition and incantation took but sixty seconds, no longer

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than it takes to let the old oaken bucket down into the well and bring it up brimming. The poetry was as good as the best high-school verse ever is, and that is better than most poetry published.

In this last stage the group were freed forever from the idea of scanning verse by tapping with a pencil on the desk, or writing rhymes for examination papers in English while scrooging and squirming. This composition of a couplet in midair, as one might say, takes as much nervous strength and concentration as to produce four pages of essay, and the result is far more pointed and to the point. Of course, the child's work is done for that day. It is exhausting if glorious.

In this last stage we were not trying anything new. Various phases of the poem games exist in a scattered way all over the world, remainders from ancient time. For instance, the composing of couplets and the capping of rhymes has been a Chinese social custom for ages, whereby one scholar introduced himself to another, when they were strangers in an inn, or the like. The old Chinese stories are full of this form of mutual recognition of belonging to the gentility. In some Latin-American countries the guests are entertained by an improviser who walks about the room and turns the occasion by word of mouth into presentable verse, putting everything into verse as fast as it happens, with the proper gesture. Then in a certain popular novel the story of a South American dictator, they play the old game in which scraps of poetry are improvised and tossed from one guest to another to be completed.

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Stately and well-established social and conventional precedents for various phases of the games may be found in all races, but turn to the greatest international influences of today. Isadora Duncan, who being dead yet speaketh, danced poetry, without music, in the poetry hour. Not a few chapters in her brilliant autobiography mention occasions of this kind when the poetry was separated from all other forms of music and danced and read for its own sake. The Denishawn Dancers try experiments that are on the edge of this idea. But it is an idea that has existed wherever poetry has been spoken, not printed or written. Only the printing press and the consequent banishment of poetry to the libraries has made poetical games seem obsolete. Obviously many of the Elizabethan madrigals and the songs in Shakespeare are for appropriate action while being read, and in both cases the tune was but a flowering of the words and not imposed upon the words by orchestra, saxophone, megaphone, radio, talking movie, telephone, or other mechanical intruder.

It is my opinion that the standard John Barrymore manner of acting Hamlet is first of all a stately dance to a chant. Sensitive people cannot avoid dancing those words. The Hampest of Ham actors and the greatest Barrymores step that play off to the same chant and much the same gesture and foot work, and the main difference is the final item of intelligence with which it is done. The acting comes out in the final production as the ultimate edge of the dance and the poem emerging to the top.

The fourth and last stage of my little dancers in June, just before they scattered for their summer picnics, has set

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me thinking as nothing else for many a long day. If you want mental stimulus and a new basis for speculation, try this out in your parlor. Always after an hour of these experiments, however awkward they seemed at the time, we all had our heads in a whirl of speculation, reconstruction, and poetical music for two days.

The title poem of this book is intended in an especial way as a poem game, hence the repetitions of the refrains. It often requires the repetition three times of a refrain for the dancer to complete the appropriate action, or fill out the step and the gesture, for words are at least three times as fast as music in expressing an idea, and generally three times as fast as dancing. This also is proved by ancient precedent. All choruses, so called, are packed with repetitions, going back to the day when the words had to be repeated in order to be danced completely. So in dancing *Every Soul Is a Circus*, or any other work in this volume, repeat any line when necessary over and over again, and let the chanters on the side lines repeat it until the dancer in the middle of the floor has been able to fill it out into a complete action story.

I have expressed in many places an impatience with the best orchestras in the world, as well as the worst music and the radio howling, and the talking moving picture howling. Artists may be offended that I have bunched all these things together, but they are all a part of the mechanical weight against which poetry and the spoken word has to struggle. Not one of them but has its good moment and its moment when it touches poetry to animate rather than to destroy, but the selection of that moment is difficult, unless you are in a

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tremendously exhilarated condition and able to keep up your spirits for a long time of waiting. Let there be one hundred times as much good music! But let the poetry-hour be a separate, literary-dancing matter. Let the best boy-actors in the dramatic societies act and speak the poems, while the girls dance in circles, round them. Boys like to be known as actors, not literally as dancers.

I found a great moment the other day in a talking motion picture news film. It was a perfect poem game. What was the music? The murmur of a gigantic crowd in the background in a grand stand, far enough away for it to have the rhythm of a subterranean river, far enough for it to be the true basis of a chorus. It was this crowd that made the occasion, assembled for a championship tennis game. There would be no championship games if the crowd did not assemble and murmur and rustle. Much nearer to the talking moving picture machine was the championship tennis player moving silently, but to the rhythm of the subterranean river. A beautiful dance! The drum music was gone, there was no regular percussion of that sort, but there was a very musical tinkle with a curious rhythm all its own, the impact of the tennis ball against the tennis racket. Right then I was prompted for one fanatical moment to say the tennis racket is about the only musical instrument we have left, and *that* when it is in the hands of Helen Wills when she is playing a championship game. Pallas Athena herself in motion! The poem was the chanting adoration of the crowd, the dancing was magnificent and triumphant tennis by California incarnate. All the youth and hope and glory of California

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and all the nonsense left out! Even the little white eyeshade worn by the player was like the helmet of Pallas Athena flashing in the sun of eternal Olympia.

If you have almost given up the talking movie, watch for news reels of Helen Wills' championship games. The diminished roar of that crowd far off was like the murmur of my own little dancers who whispered to themselves as they danced Kubla Khan, a couplet that never failed to lift them into tragic power,

"And midst this tumult Kubla heard from far,
Ancestral voices prophesying war."

As a final footnote, in the matter of the chanting of verse, I quote from the 'Tulsa, Oklahoma "Tribune," August 4, 1929:

John Masefield, in England, organized the Oxford Recitations that are doing more in England than anything else to show the advantages of recited poetry over poetry that is read in quiet.

The Englishman organized what were to be called the Oxford Recitations in July, 1923. Calling in judges who were poets or writers, and announcing the verse-speaking contests in the papers of his country, Mr. Masefield was rewarded with five hundred entries in the first contest.

It has come now to where twice five hundred young men and women enter the contests held annually in Oxford. Where the judges alone were all that came formerly to hear them, we have Mr. Masefield's word for it that some hundreds of others attend the contests and follow them as keenly as the judges. "An audience has been made," says he. "People have begun to listen."

Perhaps the chief result of the contests in England, Mr. Masefield explains in his preface to "The Oxford Recitations" just issued by the Macmillan Co., has been that hundreds of people have dis-

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covered how intense a pleasure listening to poetry can be. The American people, so much on the lookout for new sources of pleasure, might think of sampling this one.

Following his introduction there have been published in this volume "Love in the Desert" by Laurence Binyon, a genuinely effective thing when read aloud (even by a reader as poor as ourselves). "A Parting" and "The Return" are by Gordon Bottomley, while "Polyxena's Speech" and the "Messenger's Speech" are translated from the Hecuba of Euripides by Mr. Masfield. These are the plays and poems performed by various speakers in the Oxford Recitations at Oxford on July 24, 25 and 26, 1928. The winning selections of this year, we anticipate, will appear in September.

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And so we conclude our discussion of The Deep Woods Mysteries and the most solemn part of the Forest Menagerie, and that Sawdust Ring which is in the deepest of the deep woods.

PART ONE
EVERY SOUL



EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

[*Bearing in mind the Chicago World's Fair, 1933*]

I

MY BROTHERS OF THE POET-TRADE

My brothers of the poet-trade
Leave your ivory towers, and stand
On the porch, and watch this ardent band
And praise, with me,
This Masquerade.

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From a cloud by the dark Art Institute
That old Barnum comes,
Followed by serene Greek Gods,
And the lake-breeze hums.
There, on Michigan Avenue
The fellow who led the game,
On his arm sweet Jenny Lind,
Her splendor yet the same.
Neat escort! Open carriage! Foaming horses!
For a singer unafraid.
So then behold her midnight dream-parade.

Passing the dim Art Institute
Her cavalcade glides on,
Nonsense and inconsequence
We had thought forever gone.
We see it with our spirit-eyes,
And sing, to the wise.
And join the song of Jenny Lind,
An arrow above the town:—
"Go find the wonders of the dawn
And bring the wonders down,
Bring, bring the wonders down,
Bring, bring the wonders down."

With marble gods we march to the song,
And they spread the street with wonders,
The bright Athenian violets,
And the cupid babes turned loose.
Then come the slow thunders of the throne of Mother Goose,

EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS



Drowning out the wise guys
Who are crying: "What's the use?"

Though Barnum's Show is gliding by,
Now the silence is so deep
We can hear the farthest feathery clouds
Whisper in their sleep.
Then whisper the sleepers of this racking, roaring place,
Joining immortal Jenny Lind
With the songs of our new race.
But Buffalo Bill interrupts us still

EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

With the scalp of Yellow Hand.
Then comes Grizzly Adams with his grizzly band,
His bears blowing cow-horns, his bears blowing pipes,
Wearing boots like forty-niners,
Steaming like ocean-liners,
Then see stark-naked Indians, painted in stripes.
Then
The Deadwood coach.
Then
See approach
Sikh horsemen cruel and lean.
Then
Cossacks in green.

Then
Again we hear our Jenny Lind
In a white hoop-skirted gown,
Standing in Barnum's carriage
With a song for beast or clown,
Victoriously singing, over the sprawling town
"Go find the wonders of the dawn
And bring the wonders down,
Bring, bring the wonders down,
Shower, shower the wonders down,
Ring, ring the wonders down,
Go, find the wonders of the dawn
And bring the wonders down,
Bring, bring the wonders down,
Bring, bring the wonders down."

EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

II

A MILLION SINGING CIRCUSES

See, a million singing circuses
Come marching to the star!
Then a hundred million circuses,
None greater than the other,
All in a family unity,
Big sister and big brother—
Marching from the hearts that sleep,
Hearts in the nation buried deep.
Hail, turkey-gobbler, yak, and osprey,
Boa constrictor, and snake-charmer, and triumphal car!
Tiger, jackass, horse and zebra, gnu, tarantula, armadillo,
Strong man and clown,
Set free to find The Great North Star
To bring the wonders down,
Bring, bring the wonders down,
Bring, bring the wonders down.
And the whisper of Chicago
Grows sharper than its roar,
And haunts the handsome do-do birds,
The storks, the cranes, the cassowaries,
The ostriches and llamas,
And all the mixed menageries
That flap their wings,
Or dance,
From every door.

EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

Our trance-wrought United States
Sends them forth to war,
Sweeps among the wagons
And haunts the marching train:
For Chicago is the Nation,
California and Maine.

For every soul is a circus,
And every mind is a tent,
And every heart is a sawdust ring
Where the circling race is spent.

Now march from their souls the mammoths
Of old geologic time,
And mastodons risen from the six first days of slime.

Behold the wild boars of Cathay,
Sacred cats of Menes' day!
Then elephants of Buddha's day,
Elephants of Hamilcar,
Elephants of Amritzar,
And elephants Adam Forepaugh bred
In the wilds of the U. S. A.
In his happy Yankee way—
Spreading out umbrella ears
To hear the whisper sent
That sweeps from the top tent.

EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS



Elephants from sophisticated, modern Lincoln Park,
And Genesis animals two and two, two and two, two and
two,
Genesis animals two and two
From Noah's crowded ark,
All spreading out their searching ears
To hear the whisper sent,
For the heaven-born WORD is all they love
That sweeps from the top tent.

EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

III

THE LONG STREET LIFTS

Now—the long street lifts toward The Great North Star
Of Liberty and Wonder.

They hear its canaries trilling
And its prophet-choirs thunder.

And they hear a call, so far below
(A hard, an alarm-clock call they know)
It is turned to a breath like a daisy's death,
And they laugh to hear it turned to a breath:—
"Chicago, go,
Chicago, Chicago, Chicago, go,
Go Chicago, go Chicago, Go, Go, Go;"

Then follow fast the call above,
The cry from out the far North Star of Liberty and Love.

So come, let us be bold with our songs, brothers,
Come let us be bold with our songs.

IV

THE PONTOON BRIDGE MIRACLE

Prophets, preaching in new stars
Have come in ships of sleep
And built a ghostly pontoon bridge that Michigan Avenue
Can keep.

EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

Have built a causeway bright with sails
Where hares and tortoises may creep,
Where burbling bullfinches, laughing hyenas, whinnying
Shetlands
Climb the steep.

Oh the harp-song of our sand-dunes
Up this arching avenue,
Oh the voices in the prophet-sails
Oh the lovers strolling slowly, two and two!

Though every Yankee patents some iron animals at last,
And does invent his own World's Fair,
And World's Fair tunes to cheer the air,
This is wild America, not orderly Timbuctoo.
So Barnum's old procession holds proud Michigan Avenue,
Again moves by up the pontoon bridge
To the Prophet Avenue.
The thought goes again through the night so dark,
Going up to the North-star ark,
Ostriches two and two,
Kangaroos, two and two, behemoths two and two,
Hippogriffs two and two, chimeras two and two.

Oh Radio, Oh Saxophone, Oh Slide Trombone, Oh Horns
that moan:—
The Lion, the lion, goes roaring from his cage,
Ten thousand years before your jazz he roared a deeper rage.

EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

And Jumbo, great Jumbo, goes swaying left and right,
Ten Thousand years before your jazz his trumpet shook the
night.

But Jenny Lind outsings him still upon the heaven-born
wind,
Stands up in Barnum's carriage on that bridge across the vast,
That pontoon span of comet-boats arching above the past,
That silvery bridge of dawn across the cold.
In the rigging of their ships the prophets old
Sing with her their songs across the cold.

So, come let us forget our ivory-towers, brothers,
Come let us be bold with our songs.

V

BESIDE HER CARRIAGE

Run, run, beside her carriage now, up and among the stars,
Up Michigan Avenue, rainbow-high, above Chicago's carts
and cars.

We will look adown, adown, in the circus-moods of slumber,
Then straight on, to the chaos-seas and the North Star com-
ing near.

While these mastodons are singing and trumpeting away
At the joy-bells without number and the top stars that they
hear.

While underneath us all, everyone belongs,
There's a cry from every house,

EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS



From the weirdest and the tiniest,
From whale and from snail,
From walrus, seal and porpoise,
From hare and from tortoise,
From leviathan and mouse,
For menageries, like rivers, pour roaring from each house.

For every soul is a circus.
And every mind is a tent,
And every heart is a sawdust ring
Where the circling race is spent.

EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

And the lake-storms and breezes
Are but nets to save the brave,
And the planets are trapezes,
High, high above the grave.

So, come, let us be bold with our songs, brothers,
Come, let us be bold with our songs.

.

And Jenny Lind sings at shrill noon
Sweetly above the town:
"Go, find the wonders of the star
And bring the wonders down."

Victoriously singing,
Over the sprawling town:
"Go, find the wonders of the star
And bring the wonders down,
Bring, bring the wonders down,
Ring, ring the wonders down,
Shower, shower the wonders down,
Ring, ring the wonders down,
Go, find the wonders of the star
And bring the wonders down."

NOTE: This poem is not to be set to musical notation. It is not to be identified with any form of musical composition or orchestra. It is to be read with a bardic and troubadour chanting according to the spelling of the words, the manner of Welsh preaching and praying to this day. Let the whispered passages be whispered. Let the leader select certain refrains to be chanted antiphonally with the audience. Let the poem feel at home at an Eisteddfod.

A CHRIST CHILD BOOK

To my own tunes I will chant my words,
Let no men bring their tunes to twist them.
Some are words to the Christmas moons
That swept so low I could not resist them.
Those twelve half-moons, last Christmas eve
Arranged in a ring round a cloud of wonder!
And they turned to snow-bird nests on a bough
Tossed in the night-wind's organ-thunder.
Each nest had snow-birds flying around.
As the thunder ceased, they spoke like dreamers.
And they turned to angels in the nests,—
Now boats of the air with tinsel streamers.
Will I let some other man sit down
And spoil with his dots on his music-paper
.Sea-ripples I alone have heard,
While the ships grew great, each mast a taper?
Each mast a taper tall as the sky
With fire on the top more bright than moon-fire.
From the twelve gilt ships, with singing lips
Souls called my name as they passed the church-spire.
They sang lost words I had whispered before
Awake all night till the Christmas day-break.
A baby boy in my trundle bed,

EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

Who had never known a grown man's heart-ache.
When I ran bare-foot from my singing nest
To that Christmas tree in that long lost Springfield,
There were twelve gay candles, twelve balloons
And candies sweet as the clover May-Field.
Noah's arks, and apples fair,
And my shouting cousins running the show there;
And a filigree fairy lair for me:—
A Christ Child Book, on a bough bent low there.

And to my own tunes I crooned to the book.
Let no men bring their tunes to twist them.
Words from my own especial heart.
I hear them yet, and cannot resist them.

EXCUSE ME IF I CRY INTO MY HANDKERCHIEF

[A story for mature infants and immature older people]

I

Three Russian musicians, classical court composers, slept in
an attic,
An East River Attic, in a state of mind splenetic.
A sky lighted turret of the Fish Market Tenements. Sorrow
was their seneschal.
Sorrow was official, made them medieval, was steward and
major-domo,
For each ceremonial.

The cutest was the flutist.
The slide tromboner
Was the moaner.
Psaffonoff was a scoundrel, a rounder and a bounder, and a
violinist,
Yet loyal to the turret and the hall.
Listen to the story of their fall.

Neighbors in that castle hall tried to stop their fall.
A wop electrician in especial gave Sunday papers to keep
them quiet,

EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

Gave fifteen cents on rents, crusts and hot dogs by way of
diet,

Rags

To wrap their bones withal.

By Brooklyn Bridge, all year through composing classical
symphonies!

The cutest played—"Higgledy, piggledy, rilly-ra-loo,"

On a flute of crystal, bird-like tone. Yet made it blow Slav-
ically, with a groan.

The Moaner played—"Lolly-pop, eat the pup, belly-mo-lay,
Kersniff, kersniff, eat him today,"

But Slavically, on his slide trombone, as he sat all alone by
the telephone.

Psaffonoff seemed saying—"Alas, alas, poor Cock Robin lies
under the glass."

Classically, classily, Slavically, slowly, playing his speaking
violin,

Having for speed a great incapacity; touching the strings
with fingers thin.

Sorrow was their seneschal, sorrow was their all.

Excuse me if I cry into my handkerchief.

Under the skylight they watched for the daylight, scrawny,
half dead,

Blood royal and bar sinister!

And flames in the head.



EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

With Slavic Asiatic emotionalism, they quarreled all night
over
Cannibalism,
And Ivan Pre Skootsky Skay Var.
In general, just raising helpless Hell,
Yelled about sex and behaviorism, Dostkoyeffsky, Turgeneff,
Kropotkin,
Rachmaninoff, and Marie Whatya Macaller, Tolstoy and
some other feller,
Eugenics, aesthetics, aromatics and the like!
Dialogued about physiology, pathology, astrology,
Elections, electrons, atoms, molecules, morons,
Psycho-analysis, mythology, the Soviet, the Universal Strike.

At dawn slow music would penetrate
The neighbors deciding to vacate,
Music to make them hesitate.

II

For Christmas week, when luck was good, they sold a
sugared cacofony,
Or a hymn, or a part-Brahms melodee, to be played Slav-
ically, crawlingly.
Then Vodka drank, on the thinning winnings.
Made free, made free,
Their neckties new, their morals loose, at a place of glee
called
"The Pig and the Goose."

EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

Once, when spring came in a day, each thought to bear one
maid away,

A gold-haired Mehitable who could purr.

Two Slavically moaned to her of obstetrics, Russia, and the
like,

Straight on to the Universal Strike.

Psaffonoff, scoundrel, had no plan. Hid with her behind the
door.

Squeezed her just like some hired man.

Each Cossack thought himself engaged. She liked to see
three Cossacks crawl.

But loved the electrician proud and tall! Wop who was
bigger than a cop!

Married him that very week. Her flirting, sad to say, was
very sneak.

Sorrow was their seneschal. Sorrow was their all.

Excuse me if I cry into my handkerchief.

Cock-robins under the skylight-glass!

There in the attic with moans ecstatic, three Cossacks moaned
disclosures grave,

Each exposed himself her slave. Quiet, for once, in conver-
sation,

Said softly, without telling the nation, that that bridegroom
was a knave.

Yes, the three were brave. Despite their ache, said "Wahť's
the use?"

EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

Declared a truce, for Red Hair's sake, and gave the winner
game good speed,
(The jokes were broad, the talk was loose)
At the place of glee called "The Pig and The Goose."

Far off in Spokane, Washington, that wop electrician sells his
wares.
Electric bulbs and stoves and mats. Blown-out fuses he
repairs.
He turns on currents that would kill anyone but Mehitable.
Mehitable ties packages and brings about some wreckages.

Three Slav musicians climb the stairs within their New York
knightly hall,
Sorrow is their seneschal. Each man at the skylight glares.
Nothing to eat, no one to love. They sit in broken Morris
chairs.
Sorrow is their all. Love brought about their fall.
Excuse me if I cry into my
Zkqechehookerchief, my handkerchief, my handkerchief,

The chicken-faced two, forgiving her, sing of her sweet
former days
As Melisande, upon the wall, Rosamund within the maze.
Right classically.
To show thereby her fires were true, her brows were high.
They know not why they're losing style.

EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

Psaffonoff, who was rough in play, the ape-faced one, writes
classics grand,
That call her "Theda, White of Hand," makes queer slow-
time songs to show,
Her fires were high, her ways were low.
He knows not why he's losing style.

Love brought about their fall. Yet not complete as yet.
They play no blues at all.
Nor Mammy tunes nor saxophone at all, nor for The Vita-
phone.
They have not played for the phonograph, nor the radio so
rude,
Only the neighbors say—"These men intrude."

A SWAN IS LIKE A MOON TO ME

[This is specially suggested as a poem-game]

I

A swan is like a moon to me,
A swan is like a moon to me,
The swan floats through the reeds and foam,
The swan floats through the reeds and foam.
The moon floats through the clouds and stars,
The moon floats through the clouds and stars.
White mysteries floating on toward home,
White mysteries floating on toward home.
Both are feathery—both are frail,
Both are feathery—both are frail.
Both are things that swoop and sail,
Both are things that swoop and sail;
And if they dance it is so slow,
And if they dance it is so slow,
And if they swoop it is so low
And if they swoop it is so low,
They touch the bending, sleeping soul, . . . *[These two lines
spoken slowly.]*
And by their touching make it whole. . . .

II

Both born of sleep,
Both born of dream,
Twin birds of God these planets seem,



EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

Twin birds of God these planets seem,

Twin birds of God these planets seem,

Twin birds of God these planets seem,

Twin birds of God these planets seem.

Twin moons of thought,

White flames

White flames

White flames

White flames of dream. . . .

*[With increasing
rapidity to the
end.]*

THE RIM ROCK OF SPOKANE

[These two poems were the beginning of a series printed in The Spokane Chronicle, while I was the guest of Spokane.]

I

Under Spokane's brocaded sun, and her deeply embroidered
moon

I walk on the Rim Rock rampart put there by heaven's hand,
Long before the city came, before the ocean or the land.

This Rim Rock has one eastern notch for the river to run in
And the other notch is a water gate at first northwest;
Then south;

Grotesquely around, coils the rampart, like a hoop-snake
Tail in mouth.

Yet a sentinel, deep in the ages, a wall with a city to keep,
A city as young as a homesteader's farm,
As young as the chickens that cheep!

And a rampart mystery golden and green,
Black, watchful, stern and steep!

And there I walk with my father's soul, while the town is
awake or asleep.

We walk to a music on the wind, a lost Kentucky tune,
Under the trees, green, yellow, and dim,
We march to that alien bluegrass hymn,
Under Spokane's brocaded sun, and her deeply embroidered
moon.

EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

II

We look out from the Rim Rock
On the circuit of the earth.
Not to the deep sky only,
Where the golden stars have birth.

But day and night we vision
The whole earth set in flowers,
New cities acting our dramas,
And chanting these young hours.

(A song, a song, a song, a song!)

The whole earth for our victory
When we build and carve and paint.
The round globe our tomorrow,
Columbus our old saint.

For we would sing the song we make
Within these whispering walls
So well the quivering aspens hear
At the Rhone's upper falls—

(A song, a song, a song, a song!)

So well the skylarks sing it back
From Babylon's ruined halls;
So well the sea round Fujisan
Hears, and replies, and calls.

*(A song, a song, a song, a song!
A lost Kentucky tune!
An old Virginia tune!)*

BUTTERFLY PICTURE-WRITING

*[Written for Ruth St. Denis to dance on the top of a
watch-crystal.]*

Kind friend, see the word-signs
On the butterflies' wings!
Red Indian hieroglyphics
On the butterflies' wings!
The bee buzzes,
The orchard bird sings,
But
Read the picture-writing
On the butterflies' wings,
Read, read the long story
On the butterflies' wings!

THE VOYAGE

[*Written for Ted Shawn*]

See my mast, a pen!
What are my sails?
Many crescent moons.
What is my sea?
A bottle of ink.
Where do I go?
To heaven again.
What do I eat?
The Amaranth flower
While the winds through the jungles
Swing old tunes.
I eat that flower with ivory spoons.
While the winds, through the jungles
Swing old tunes.
The songs the angels used to sing
When Heaven was not old autumn, but spring,
The old sweet songs of Heaven
And spring.

WHAT THE BEACH HEN SAID WHEN THE TIDE CAME IN

Proud waves break into cocks' combs
When the sea is crowing.
The sea is a great rooster now
Green eyed, and very knowing,
Strutting in the sunrise
With his feathers blowing,
With his big plumes foaming,
With his green eyes roaming,
With his long spurs glistening,
With his high neck bristling,
"Cock-a-doodle crowing, crowing, crowing!
Green-eyed, very knowing!"

WHEN THE SUN ROSE FROM THE MARIPOSA LILY

[This is suggested as a poem-game]

When the sun rose from the mariposa lily in the sky,
It was first a feather, . . . then . . .
It was next a bird's wing, . . . then . . .
It was bird, and egg, and shell, and nest, . . . then.
For the livelong day,
The fire-dove, the cloud-dove, of the sky, east and west.

And so again the days had come to pass,
When the sun rose from the lily,
And the moon rose from the moonflower,
And the stars rose,
The stars rose
From the grass.

QUITE ENCHANTED

On Spokane mountain I met a dragon fly;
He seemed a messenger of high adventures.
He said, "If you would be the world's explorer,
Let some dragon fly be pioneer,
All dragon flies are quite enchanted creatures."

ADDRESS TO A CANOE-BIRCH

Canoe-birch, Canoe-birch
What shall we do?
Shall we cut you down, my dear
And make a half-moon boat of you?

THE RED INDIAN WITCH GIRL

The north wind barks on Gunsight Pass.
And the witch looks sly, and the old trees sigh,
As she chants her charms on the glacier grass.
The witch looks sly as the howl goes by,
The hound called the north wind, doomed to die.
The witch is the Manitou's daughter, so young
That she still is learning the Indian tongue.
Yet that young witch is so very old
That she knows the south wind soon grows bold
And spring comes in on the north wind's track.
The witch bends low. On her fairy back
She carries a burden triple and strange,
Across the sunset-gilded range,
Seeds for spring
In the spotted sack,
The cries of spring,
In the crimson sack,
And the dreams of the midnight chirping birds
Are hidden away in the sack so black,
And the witch looks sly as the howl goes by,
The howl of the north wind, doomed to die.

WHAT IS THE MOHAWK?

This I mean by "The Mohawk"—
There is a dragon-soul
In this land,
That lived here before Leif the lucky
Came with his Viking band.
There is a power in the soil
Deeper than oil wells or mines.
There is a soul of the mountains
Of the Appalachians and of the Rockies,
Higher than lumbermen's favorite pines.

This is The Mohawk: he is every Red Indian.
Every Red Indian is in him; and so, friend, are we,
If our hearts are still Western
Hard-riding
And noble and free.

THE MOHAWK IN THE SKY

[Being a Parable of the Sudden Appearance of the United States Ideas in World Affairs.]

Beware,
Oh British Empire,
There's a Mohawk in the sky!
Beware,
Plotters of Servia,
There's a Mohawk in the sky!
Beware,
Oh Russian Red-Fire,
There's a Mohawk in the sky!
Beware,
Sages of India,
There will be war on high:
There's a Mohawk in the sky!

And beware,
Each Irish gnome,
There's a Mohawk in the sky!
Beware,
Ghosts on the Rhine,
There's a Mohawk in the sky!
Beware,
Ghosts of Rome,

EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

There's a Mohawk in the sky!
A war of dreams on high!

Oh ghosts of dusty Egypt,
And dusty Palestine,
Awake your priests and prophets,
Fill them with battle wine;
Send them to war on high.
Beware,
Beware!
See there
In the roaring air,
There's a Mohawk in the sky!

BEHIND MOUNT SPOKANE, THE BEEHIVE MOUNTAIN

Comrades, behind the mountain
There are hiding
Honey-sweet plans that hum for our children to come.
The scamps have been but a few months on this planet
And now they hear their ancient beehive hum.
Bright bees! They hope for singing and honey-making
And robbing flowers for nectar for the crowd.
Stillness can be rest at the noonday nap time
And then they hear their mountain hum out loud.
Grown folks, who eat that honey, sooner or later
Will find United States visions in the sky
And hunt for more, till they are broken and footsore,
But hiking on with faces lifted high.
The faithful will see The Mighty Mohawk Dragon
Who ruled the wilds before the days of steam.
Then see in the sky The Locomotive Dream:—
The dragon that is father of locomotives;
All the United States dragon-fires a-stream,
The smoke screen dragons of the airplane squadrons,
And dragons driven by wireless, now unknown,
Climbing Aldebaran's porch and Saturn's throne.

THE VIRGINIANS ARE COMING AGAIN

Babbitt, your tribe is passing away.
This is the end of your infamous day.
The Virginians are coming again.

With your neat little safety-vault boxes,
With your faces like geese and foxes,
You
Short-legged, short-armed, short-minded men,
Your short-sighted days are over,
Your habits of strutting through clover,
Your movie-thugs, killing off souls and dreams,
Your magazines drying up healing streams,
Your newspapers, blasting truth and splendor,
Your shysters, ruining progress and glory,
Babbitt, your story is passing away.
The Virginians are coming again.

All set for the victory, calling the raid
I see them, the next generation,
Gentlemen, hard-riding, long-legged men,
With horse-whip, dog-whip, gauntlet and braid,
Mutineers, musketeers,
In command
Unafraid:
Great-grandsons of tide-water, and the bark-cabins,
Bards of the Blue-ridge, in buckskin and boots,

EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

Up from the proudest war-path we have known
The Virginians are coming again.

The sons of ward-heelers
Threw out the ward-heelers,
The sons of bartenders
Threw out the bartenders,
And made our streets trick-boxes all in a day,
Kicked out the old pests in a virtuous way.
The new tribe sold kerosene, gasoline, paraffine.
Babbitt sold Judas. Babbitt sold Christ.
Babbitt sold everything under the sun.
The Moon-Proud consider a trader a hog.
The Moon-Proud are coming again.

Bartenders were gnomes,
Foreigners, tyrants, hairy baboons.
But you are no better with saxophone tunes,
Phonograph tunes, radio tunes,
Water-power tunes, gasoline tunes, dynamo tunes,
And pitiful souls like your pitiful tunes
And crawling old insolence blocking the road,
So, Babbitt, your racket is passing away.
Your sons will be changelings, and burn down your
world.

Fire-eaters, troubadours, conquistadors,
Your sons will be born, refusing your load,
Thin-skinned scholars, hard-riding men,
Poets unharnessed, the moon their abode,
With the stateman's code, the gentleman's code,
With Jefferson's code, Washington's code,



EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

With Powhatan's code!

From your own loins, for your fearful defeat
The Virginians are coming again.

Our first Virginians were peasants' children
But the Power of Powhatan reddened their blood,
Up from the sod came splendor and flood.

Eating the maize made them more than men,
Potomac fountains made gods of men.

In your tottering age, not so long from you now
The terror will blast, the armies will whirl,
Cavalier boy beside cavalier girl

In the glory of pride, not the pride of the rich,
In the glory of statesmanship, not of the ditch.

The old grand manner, lost no longer:

Exquisite art born with heart-bleeding song
Will make you die horribly, raving at wrong.

You will not know your sons who are true to this soil,
For Babbitt could never count much beyond ten,
For Babbitt could never quite comprehend men.

You will die in your shame, understanding not day,
Out of your loins, to your utmost confusion
The Virginians are coming again.

Do you think boys and girls that I pass on the street
More strong than their fathers, more fair than their
fathers,

More clean than their fathers, more wild than their
fathers,

More in love than their fathers, deep in thought not their
fathers',

EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

Are meat for your schemes diabolically neat?
Do you think that all youth is but grist to your mill
And what you dare plan for them, boys will fulfill?
The next generation is free. You are gone.
Out of your loins, to your utmost confusion
The Virginians are coming again.

Rouse the reader to read it right.
Find a good hill by the full-moon light,
Gather the boys and chant all night:—
"The Virginians are coming again."
Put in rhetoric, whisper, and hint;
Put in shadow, murmur, and glint;
Jingle and jangle this song like a spur.
Sweep over each tottering bridge with a whirr,
Clearer and faster up main street and pike
Till sparks flare up from the flints that strike.
Leap metrical ditches with bridle let loose.
This song is a war, with an iron-shod use.
Let no musician, with blotter and pad
Scribble his pot-hooks to make the song sad.
Find
Your own rhythms
When Robert E. Lee
Gallops once more to the plain from the sea.
Give the rebel yell every river they gain.
Hear Lee's light cavalry rhyme with rain.
In the star-proud, natural fury of men
The Virginians are coming again.

This poem was written as a poetic summary, after I had published the prose book "The Litany of Washington Street."

THE LOCOMOTIVE DRAGON-HIPPOGRIFF

[First printed in the Spokane Chronicle, while I was the guest of Spokane.]

Now there is a track with white rails on its back
That goes straight on to the sky.
It starts at Sun Mountain close by a blue fountain,
And the long curve takes your eye.
The lines were surveyed; by white eagles were made,
When the Star Spangled Banner was young,
And the telegraph wires are connected star-fires,
And the trestles by lightnings hung.
And on Fourth of July routed through to the sky
Goes the engine for which it was made,
The Hippogriff—father of all the steam trains,
In bunting and silver arrayed.
He looks like a dragon and he is a big one,
You beheld him just once on your trail,
The first time you saw a steam engine go by,
When you were but three, and frail.
When you were but three and could fearfully see
The monster belching up flame,
As a four-footed creature, a midnight amazer,
Hobgoblin without a name.

EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

You were nearer to reason than you are just now,
You are twelve and too smart and too wise,
So think of the engine, the first you encountered,
With terrified baby-eyes.

The Father of engines goes up the long railroad
On Fourth of July with a cry.
If you will believe me, implicitly trust me,
I will outline his thoughts on the fly.
Sung to the tune, the magical rune
Of that engine chug-chugging so high.
His mental adventures like stars without number,
Will take a large volume or two.
But watch the white track for the engine comes back
With a load of red apples for you.

THE CLOCKS THAT I LIKE BEST

The clocks I like the best are these,
The rising sun, the setting sun.
I like clear days and endless time,
And things begun and then half done,
And then well and completely done,
Between the rising and the setting sun.

THE MOON IS A FLOATING SEA-SHELL

The floating nautilus of the upper sea,
One of the boats that sweep above the sun,
Humming its sea-shell song, sailed down to me,
And bore my thought away—a white-winged one,
A proper little thought, a school-marm thing.
But in the sky, that little teacher of mine,
That sharp-voiced old maid thought, will learn to sing,
Choiring with shell and sky and every iridescent thing,
With every pearl cloud on the wing.

THE RANGER'S HOUND DOG

Guarding the shack from poacher and thug.
The hound dog sits on the bearskin rug,

A HIGH-SCHOOL NATIONAL SONG

This is the song we would sing:

"Glory to this land,

Let glory be given

By every voice and hand.

We abhor

The cry of war,

The strut, the pride, the hate."

This is the song we sing:

"Let Beauty be the State,

Let Peace be the State,

Let Wisdom be the State,

Let the Wonder and the thunder of Great Music be the State.

Man marched west from Asia,

Hunting the world's soul

And we are near the end of the west,

Have almost touched the goal.

Let us find it here.

Let us build a nation

Where Wonder is the deep of it,

And Peace its best creation,

Wonder that comes from Labor,

Peace that comes from art.

EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

Peace that comes from prayer,
While the Nation sets apart,
All its Youth for glory,
All its Youth for Beauty;
Counting the years
In trees kept green,
And girls and boys taught noble duty.
Counting the years by highways white,
And towers that magnify the night,
While skylark Youth,
All wings, uplifts its flight
Through dawns of new delight,
Singing and winging on and on:—
Let Beauty be the State,
Let Peace be the State,
Let Wisdom be the State,
Let the Wonder and the thunder of Great Music be the State,
Let the Wonder and the thunder of Great Singing be the
State.

[The above is not to be set to musical notation. If a group of students read it carefully and expressively in chorus, they will discover the natural chant of reading to which it is already set.]

THREE RED INDIANS

Three Indians stood beside a creek,
In the Spokane valley-land,
Their medicine bows and arrows
Waved above the purple sand.
And they heard Chief Joseph's last retreat,
Red ghosts went by through the apples and the wheat.
And the stream turned to blood beneath their feet,
The Blood of Joseph's ancient band;
And one of them said,
"The stain will go
When rivers of battle never flow,
When every sea smokes the pipe of peace
And every captive finds release,
When only winds of friendship blow,
The stain will go
When the world is at rest,
The stain will go
When the world is at peace."

PART TWO

EVERY MIND

Containing a discussion of the clowns of the mountains, the deep-woods clowns, and the funniest part of the forest menagerie.

ON PORCUPINE RIDGE

I met a little porcupine,
He hardly made a sound,
He waddled down the muddy path,
And scornfully looked round.
I did not touch the porcupine,
I did not stroke his quills.
They say that if you do, you end
In fever and chills.
We slept in an old cabin,
We barred the windows and doors.
We tried to rest, we covered up,
Affecting sleeps and snores.
Yet all night long the beasts,
The moose, the grizzly bear,
The catamount, and such like, climbed
The roof and took the air.
One of them sawed a board and scared us
 most to fits,
Pushed the woodpile over,
Tore a bush to bits.
We peeped out in the morning,
Like Noah for a sign.
All the animals were gone,
But just one porcupine.

EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

Do you suppose that all that noise
Was just that porcupine?

I rebuilt the fire next night,
To keep the beasts away.
We quivered in our sleeping bags
Until the dawn of day,
What was it gnawed the cans?
What was it climbed the tree?
What was it scratched the gravel?
What could it be?
My pard had a theory,
And of course I had mine.
But when the sun arose,
Once more that porcupine.

THE CALICO CAT

Yes, he came
Through the storm
Without stain,
The Calico Cat, in the rain.

When the rainbow had come,
And gone,
He still had his best things on.

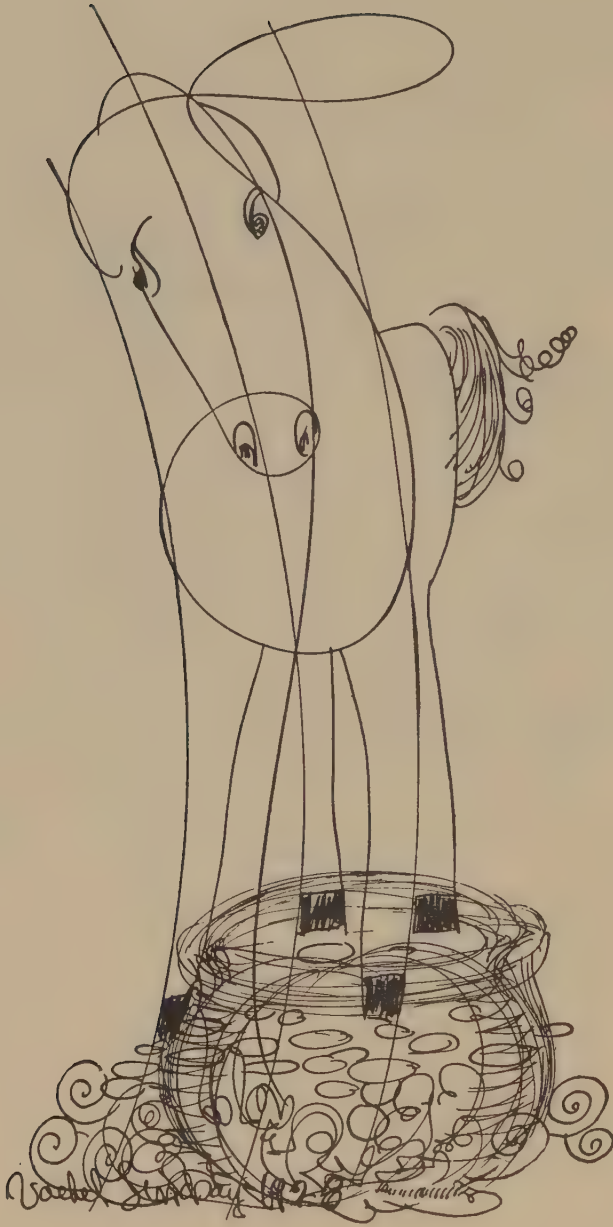
Sunset flamed,
And passed,
But the calico colors
Were fast.

THE WICKED POUTER PIGEON

The wicked pouter pigeon
Puffed cigarettes,
On bets.



Rachel Lindsay 1928 -



FRIEND FOREST-HORSE

Friend Forest-horse is bold,
Sagacious, and serene,
Walking through the rainbow,
And the gold,
And taking in the scene.

INTERLUDE: DO NOT STUFF THEM WITH CHILDREN'S SONGS

Do not stuff them with children's songs,
The neat and the pretty sugary words,
The cheap, the tawdry, the tinkling tunes.
Give knives and forks, as well as spoons,
Serve them, sometimes,
With grown-up runes.
Let them use, without much care
The words with which you free the air.

Let those little men be gay,
Sparring, rioting, riding away.
Teach the little women to be
Squirrels, elves and girls of the sea,
Centaur's children, riding far,
Mature bright angels, on this star.
This planet has wings, is flying with joy.
And the songs fair Chatterton wrote as a boy
Excel the rhymes from a nurse-girl's lips,
And the tunes that cherub Mozart made
Are still tremendous ocean-ships
Where other babes sail on and on
To where their own best thoughts have gone,
To shores they have already reached,
Where their little Noah's arks have beached.

EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

I'll not debar shrewd Mother Goose.
That sharp cartoonist still is good.
I'll not debar wise Edward Lear
His rhythms bad, his drawings queer,
For even there, in the nursery air
Twice-triple thoughts appear.

And in the midst of this, my book
Plain mimickings of him you find
And Thackeray, cartoonist kind,
Whose pictures in the "Rose and the Ring"
Started young thoughts voyaging.
Scribblers maybe, and yet they kept
Young birds upon the fledgling wing,
And made the nest-born fancy sing.

“HOW” AND “HOW”

[*A Poem-Game*]

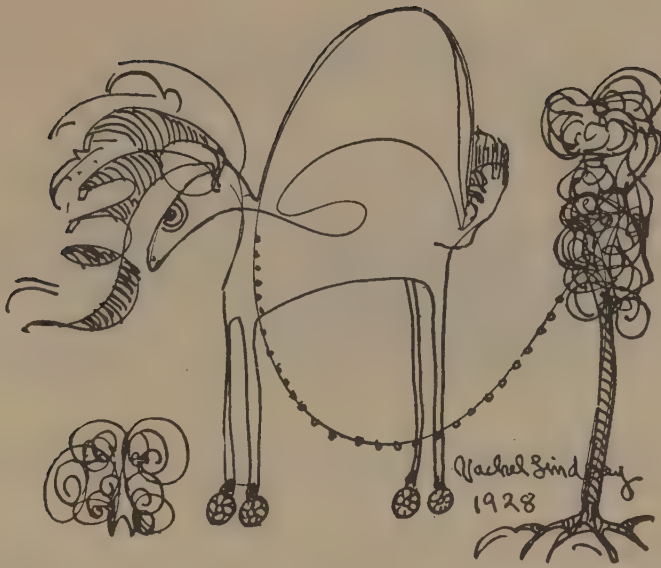
A proud young parrot with a crest,
And a grandma parrot in a cap,
Sat in the hot West Indies,
And they heard a “tap, tap.”
Great-grandma parrot, tapping,
A ghost upon the bough.

And the youngster said:—“Good Evening,”
And the youngster said:—“Good Evening,”
And the youngster said:—“Good Evening”
And the grey ghost said:—“How,”

And “How, How, How,”
And the youngster said:—“Good Evening”
And the grey ghost said “How”
And “How, How, How.”
And so on, ad infinitum.

IF YOU ARE A MOUSIE

Pack rats are fat,
They yip and they yap
On Yakinakak Creek.
They clack and they squeak
On Yakinakak Creek.
They skin their own kin
On Yakinakak Creek.
The pack rats are fat
On Yakinakak Creek.
If you are a mousie
Away from your housie
You will never come back
If once you get slack
On Yakinakak Creek.
They drive in a pack,
They will hurry and hack
And hunt you straight on
To the hot Hornet Creek.
Alas and alack,
You will never come back,
If you ever get slack
On Yakinakak Creek.

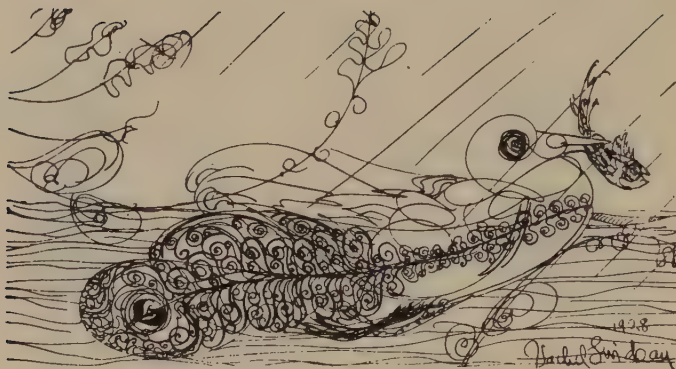


THE PET ELK

Peep
Through the curtain.

This scene
Reveals

The pet Elk,
On Wheels.



THE WILD FOREST DUCK

A wild forest duck,
A speckled, marauding duck,
Stole for his tail a peacock's feather,
But he had not the peacock's squawk-talk,
Nor the cityfied peacock's irritated air,
As though mere beauty were hard to bear.

He was too well suited, altogether,
Could not complain of the forest weather,
He found most any forest fair.

Did not sneer at the animals,
Did not stare.

Nor long to walk where peacocks walk,
Would not shriek nor peck in his talk,
Nor slander the animals, tear around,
Nor hump up feathers and glare.

As though mere beauty,
As though mere beauty,
As though mere beauty were hard to bear.



MIKE WHALER AND THE PARROT

Mike Whaler, a sailor, a whaler on the seven seas,
Found a parrot in a forest where volcanoes take their ease,
In between the mountains talking, squawking, and walking.

He took it back to his old home
Resolving never more to roam.

On Fourth of July just to make merry
He gave a giant, well-lighted fire-cracker
To humble the mussy, fussy old parrot and scare it.

And there was a riot when the cracker exploded,
The parrot knew not that the cracker was loaded.

Do not talk too much, you may get in dutch.

THE FUR-BACKED SKATE FISH

The fur-backed skate fish come and go
In the glaciers, dressed like the Esquimaux.

They swim and crawl

From Hudson Bay.

They are not caught with string and stick—

You must dive in and knife them quick.

You must be quick,

You must say "Boo!"

And scare them, too,

Or they'll bite you.

They keep quite warm in the glacial cracks,

But freeze to death on the horses' backs,

When we bring a catch to camp to fry—

They are frozen hard

On the Fourth of July.

THE BREAKFAST AND DINNER TREES

Stemming gooseberries, stringing beans, shelling peas,
And raking the garden and yard are hard.
Weeding the garden and yard much harder,
And you feel like a sizzling skillet of lard.

Then dream
Of the breakfast and dinner trees
That bloom while the monkeys take their ease
In the Robinson Crusoe Islands overseas.



THE EAGLE HEN

Our valiant eagle hen
Who does her level best!
Who builds a brushwood nest near the mountain lion's den,
And nature takes her course and does the rest.

The eggs, in the sunshine,
Tumble and roll and hatch
And then the little eagles run and peck and scratch.

THE WHISTLING MARMOT

Queer is ambition,
Queer are the thwarted animals
To which ambition makes appeal!

The whistling marmot stood on his hind legs
And whistled to the bears
How his ambition
Was to be a nice trained seal.

THE FERN CALLED: "THE GRASSHOPPER'S GRANDMA"

The fern called: "The Grasshopper's Grandma,"
Knitted six sox out of grass for her grandson,
Bracken Hop Green, her most favorite one.
She began in the morning:
By night they were done, every one.

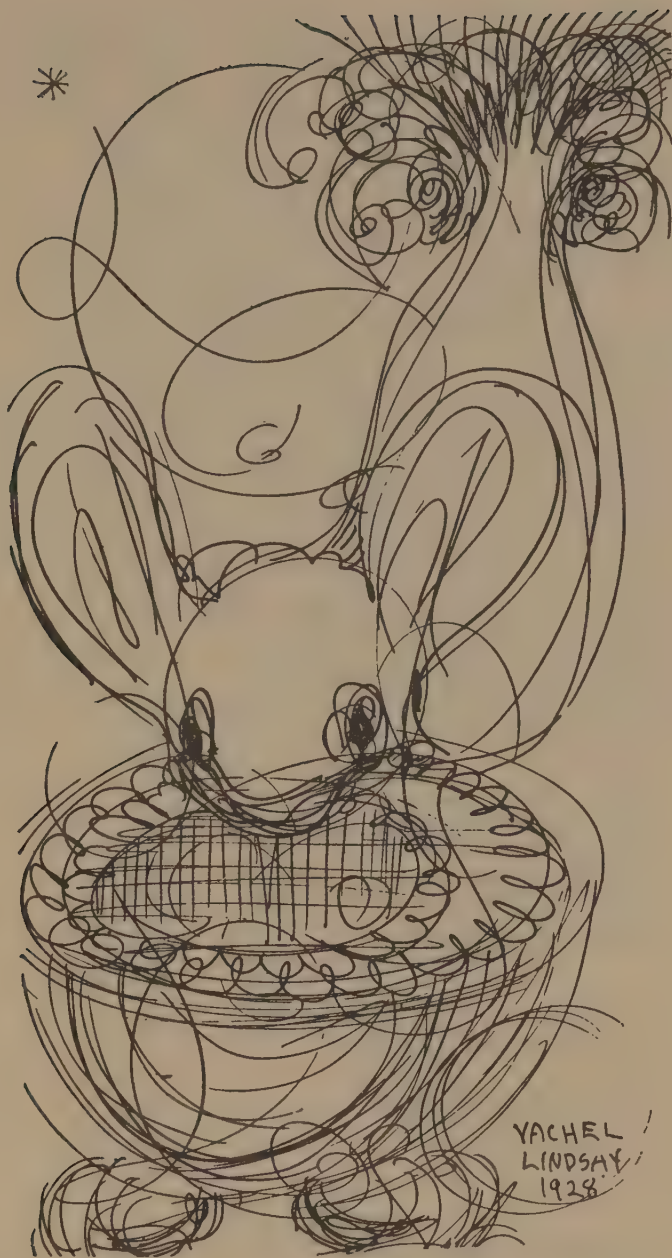
ROBINSON CRUSOE'S PARROTS

I saw in the smoke of the Hallowe'en bonfire
Leeping on high to the midnight sky,
In the smoke green as spinach,
Smoke green as green grapes for green-grape pie,
Smoke yellow as carrots,
Pictures that looked like Crusoe's parrots,
And the bonfire chattered like Crusoe's parrots.

THE INFORMATION BUREAU

"The baby bears," the ranger said
To the little New York girl,
"Put up their hair in papers,
"To make it curl."

"This is the way," the cowboy said
"The baby bears are fed:
"The mamma bear
"Catches a fish;
"Then serves it raw,
"In a stone dish."



THE THIRSTY PUPPY'S DREAM

Ralph's puppy dreamed on a day of drouth
Of a funny little dog-fish with a cup in his mouth.

Then dreamed of a mountain waterfall
That came from a hole in the wall.

A SNAIL PARADE

And is anything else
Quite so stately and staid
As a snail parade?

And is anything else
In such whimsy arrayed
As a snail parade?

I saw on the rose-walk
While May winds played
A snail parade.

I saw in my lettuce
Spoiling my trade
A snail parade.

I saw in the woods
Where the Autumn winds bayed
A snail parade.

They looked so wise
Those bad snails made
Me feel afraid.

EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

"We know a secret,"
Their air conveyed.
"All thoughts have weighed."

"We know the seasons.
And why the blade
Of winter is made.

"We hide in the sky
Till the frost is allayed.
Till the snail parade.

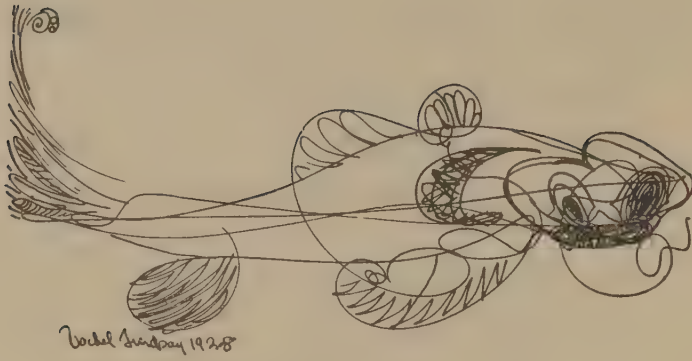
"By Hallowe'en bonfires
We rise unafraid
By the smoke conveyed."

And I saw in the smoke
Of a Hallowe'en bonfire
Up to the star-fire
Up to the moonfire
A gorgeous tremendous
Fire cavalcade,
A snail parade.

THE WOOD-SQUEAK

[Chant this rapidly, with repetitions]

Deep in the park after dark
The wood-squeak troubled us more and more,
Till we nailed his skin to the old barn door.



THE TREE-CLIMBING FISH

Down near Salton by the village of Alton
There was once a tree-climbing fish.
That fish, in haste and pain,
Left his buckhorn cactus tree
For the Salton Sea
When it threatened rain.

MY TREE TOAD

My tree toad
Climbed
The Curly
Little
Fern-leaf.

Then
Tumbled
Off,
And came to grief.

THE WATERFALL THAT SINGS LIKE A BACCHANTE

The trail has the tracks of bears and of cubs and of deer, 1
Of wolves and of porcupines, half beaten out
By the merry horsemen who drove by with a shout
Only a little while ago; and here
Are everlasting flowers and reeds and bracken,
And strawberry leaves turned red in the late year.
We sit and listen to a waterfall
Far away in the deep woods to the south,
It sounds like a bird with a bacchante mouth.
And we look at the glaciers high above the wood,
And watch the waning day, and call it good.

THE POWERFUL SQUIRREL

In the monotonous forest where all the beasties whine,
How and why did the squirrel drive the porcupine?
He promised him a better place than home in which to dine.

THE WICKED OLD TREE

A wicked old tree at the top of the pass
Was so wicked his surface-roots blasted the grass.

HOW WE PAPOOSES PLANT FLOWERS

"Sometimes they take root in a week.

"Sometimes a loon plants a flower with his beak.

"Sapsuckers and flickers, jays and nutcrackers

"Are our heartiest backers.

"We have watched them at sunrise,

"When they were not looking,

"Gathering first and then scattering seed,

"Planting harebell and egg-plant and crimson fireweed,"
Said the flying papooses.

THE WHALE WE SAW

In the Hallowe'en bonfire we saw a small whale,
The fire was his eye, the smoke was his tail,
His scales were new tin picnic pans and picnic palm-leaf
fans.

BEWARE OF THE SILVER GRIZZLY

There are bears in the woods around us,
There are bear-rugs on the floor,
There are bear skins on the wall
With the snow shoes and the flags,
There are bear-heads over the door,
Stuffed bears in the hall:
Terribly tall.

Bears are always perilous.
Bears are serious.

But the dangerous bear of all
Is that Silver Grizzly called the moon,
Above the waterfall.
Beware how you meet him in the trail.
Beware his deadly blow.
One touch of the Silver Grizzly
Will lay the best man low.

MISTER CHIPMUNK

[*A Poem-Game*]

In the thimbleberry, raspberry, huckleberry trail,
On the way to Indian Pass,
We heard the cheery, pert and leery, swift and eerie
Chipmunk's hail.

The chipmunk, the chipmunk,
The brisk and frisky chipmunk
Who will take a risky trail

To satisfy curiosity
And chatter, whisk and wail.

The chipmunk, the chipmunk,
The monkey of the squirrel tribe
Quivering with monkeyshines
Alert from ear to tail—

In the thimbleberry, raspberry, huckleberry trail.
In the thimbleberry, raspberry, huckleberry trail.
He is a rascal and a rip:

He carries moonshine on his hip.

The chipmunk, the chipmunk, the chipmunk, the chipmunk.
No butterfly is quite so drunk,
No butterfly is quite so drunk;
He haunts the tent,
He gnaws the pack,
Even before you turn your back
He steals a cough drop from the sack.

EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

Even before you turn your back
He knocks the towel from the rack;
He licks the can that held the beans
And stores the label in his jeans,
The chipmunk, the chipmunk, the chipmunk, the chipmunk.
In the thimbleberry, raspberry, huckleberry trail,
In the thimbleberry, raspberry, huckleberry trail.
The chipmunk is a little chap
No bigger than a kindling scrap,
And yet he sits there like the boss—
An Injun chief no man should cross.
Preaching in Choctaw on a pail,
His paw he waves, his foot he stamps,
He twitters, sniffs and whirls and ramps,
Takes full possession of the camps.
No butterfly is quite so drunk
No butterfly is quite so drunk
In the thimbleberry, raspberry, huckleberry trail.
Oh he is full of ginger, oh he is full of sin,
Oh he is full of ginger, oh he is full of sin,
The original Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn
The original Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn,
In the thimbleberry, raspberry, huckleberry trail,
In the thimbleberry, raspberry, huckleberry trail.
The chipmunk,
The chipmunk,
The chipmunk,
The chipmunk.

THE SMOKE LION

Behold the mountain lion sometimes seen in the campfire
flame,
"Kit Carson" is his name,
All smoke and gold and green.
And he is mean and game.
He is like a forest fire, hard to tame.



THE GLACIAL FLEA

Glacial fleas who are really nice
Are supposed to live upon weather and ice.
This glacial flea was a greedy brute,
This glacial flea bit the May-apple fruit.

THE CAULIFLOWER WORM

Bad worm!
He eats the cauliflower.
Yet dreams of higher things.
Listens to the meadow-lark!
And wonders how it sings!

ROBINSON CRUSOE'S MONKEY

Zip! flared the Hallowe'en bonfire,
Hip hip! called the boys as they rolled up a log,
And sat in the smoke and the firelight and fog.

They saw in the smoke of the Hallowe'en bonfire,
Smoke that wagged like a very small doggie,
Crusoe's monkey, the fog for a donkey.

Then it climbed up a sunflower higher and higher,
Up, up, up a sunflower,

Up a sunflower,

A sunflower fire.

CONCERNING A WESTERN MOUNTAIN
SHAPED LIKE A WHALE

[*Whale Butte Near Whale Creek*]

The whale tried in vain to swim from his pain,
When the hornet drew near and assaulted his face
Without grace.

The whale tried in vain to crawl from his pain,
Down the little Whale Creek, he grew fainty and weak
And no longer could speak.

And was petrified there in whalish despair,
For the hornet drew near and again stung his face
Without grace.

Beware of the hornet, though silly and small,
Do not scorn him at all.

And if born a whale, stick to the ocean:
Beware of the perilous mountain emotion.

THE FLYING PAPOOSES ARE BOYS AND GIRLS WITH WINGS

Dressed in bead strings,
And the wings of butterflies and storms,
Of night owls and of day owls,
Of water falls from eagle mountains,
And all strange wide-winged, lovely, terrible things,
These beautiful brown flying birds
Burn our eyeballs dim.
There is no flaw from bonnet to toe,
Or in their Manitou hymn.

They fly above and sing new songs
Where the willow-tree combs its hair.
Swinging boughs by the cliffside, fog-white and fair,
Snow-white and fair,
Very tall and fair!

The willow sings to them, they sing to her,
And the little trout revelling there.

And so we conclude our discussion of The Clowns of the Mountains, of the Deep Woods Clowns, and the funniest part of the Forest Menagerie.

PART THREE

EVERY HEART

This section is for Campfire girls, for Boy-Scouts and for us all.

ON ENTERING A MORE SOLEMN FOREST

This is the place where learning sweeps upon us.
We are overwhelmed with things that we do not know:
The learning of the rocks, the beasts, the weather—
Into a million mysteries we go.



WHEN WE PLUNGE INTO THE WILDERNESS

When we plunge into the wilderness
My wife and babes and I,
We feel ourselves drawn in and in forever,
And we will serve the lost trails till we die.
When we march on into the wilderness
We know not how to dress
Nor where to sleep, nor how to keep the fire.
Yet we are drawn forever by desire,
Hunting the Eden of the Bible days,
Hunting the haunts of fays of nursery days,
Hunting the ways of our fathers, the pioneers,
Hunting the ancient world's lost lovely years.
When we plunge, plunge into the wilderness,
My wife and babes and I,
Drawing apart the veils of rain and weed,
Drawing apart the curtains of the bush,
Drawing apart the veils of snow and sun,
Drawing apart the curtains of the wind-cry and the hush
We find the silence of the hidden lake,
We find the sunlight of the reed and rush,
We find the reasons we would like to dress
Like hills, in sod,
Like cliffs, in mountain flowers;
And build our fires like Indian ghosts and powers,

EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

And sleep like wild-cats, mountain sheep, and bears,
And learn the secrets the old Edens keep,
And untold secrets of the western lairs,
When we plunge, plunge into the wilderness,
On, on, into the wilderness,
My wife and babes and I.

MEETING OURSELVES

We met ourselves as we came back
As we hiked the trail from the north.
Our foot-prints mixed in the rainy path
Coming back and going forth.
The prints of my comrade's hob-nailed shoes
And my tramp shoes mixed in the rain.
We had climbed for days and days to the North
And this was the sum of our gain:
We met ourselves as we came back,
And were happy in mist and rain.
Our old souls and our new souls
Met to salute and explain—
That a day shall be as a thousand years,
And a thousand years as a day.
The powers of a thousand dreaming skies
As we shouted along the trail of surprise
Were gathered in our play:
The purple skies of the South and the North,
The crimson skies of the South and the North,
Of tomorrow and yesterday.

MY LADY, DANCER FOR THE UNIVERSE

I

THE CIRCUS CALLED "THE UNIVERSE"

My lady, dancer for the Universe,
Teaches our children to spread out small hands
Gesturing welcome to all beasts and lands.
My lady, hostess to the Universe,
Teaches the birds to open wide their homes,
Teaches all friends to open wide their homes,
Saying welcome to all golden tomes,
Saying welcome to all great devices
That bring us chariots of fire at wild-wood prices,
Saying welcome to each caravan
That comes with forest messages for man.

My lady, hostess to the Universe
Says to our little son: "Peace, peace, my child,
And welcome to our pine-cone fire,
And to our candle-lighted table,
And a little crib by little sister,
And this world so wild.

II

FOREST-MIRRORS

“For Christmas, you shall welcome in your time
Mirrors that flash from forests far away
Upon the spangles of the Christmas-tree—
Pictures that come from farther than Cathay.
Yes, television will be greater soon,
Bringing new wing-wrapped scenes from beyond the moon.
Television follows the air-mail arrow,
And wireless brings it, as spring brings the sparrow.
And what of the world-wide vitaphones that rise?
Will they be better than the butterflies
I see in my new Christmas baby’s eyes?

Will they bring songs too sweet for human ears?
None will be soft as your dear smiles and tears.
None will be wild, like the dear hope we hold
To keep you changeless with your hair of gold,
To keep your cheeks like fruit, your gestures bold.
No forest-mirror that queer day will bring
Reporting nightingales and flying men a-wing,
Reporting curious bees and talking swans a-wing,
Equals today’s, wherein we see your sister play and sing,

EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

And make small faces, clap her hands on high,
Strutting through our cabin, curls and cap awry,
Preening with home-grown vanity sublime.
With this small strut my babes must conquer time.

III

THE DRUID-HARP

"For Christmas you shall welcome in your day
The Harp that comes from this candle-flame with rhyme.
For when at Yule this cabin-candle burns,
The flame sings on, in forest shapes by turns.
Even the harp it makes is forest made,
And like a waterfall, its tunes, self-played.
It burns not down, but leaps like a tree-spire.
A Druid harp forms in the ancient fire.
It gives an old tune from an unseen hand
That reaches here from far-off fairyland.

IV

THE DRUID CHRISTMAS

"For Christmas you shall welcome in your day
Moon-mistletoe that never knew the earth,
And Christmas-trees that are not grown from earth
But from this Druid candle-flame have birth,
And strawberries of winter, not July,
And Druid roses that go floating by."

THE SICK EAGLE

We found an old sick eagle in the path,
Too tired for soaring and too weak for wrath,
Drooping like a great old man gone down
Before his youngest rival in the town.
Too lost for fear, and dizzier by far
Than when he flew above the sun's hot car,
This eagle could not leap above the trail,
The weeds were far too high, his legs too frail;
And so he winged along ahead and sprawled,
Fluttered hard and crawled,
Like an old farmer trying not to be
A nuisance to the babes about his knee.
And then he found a root and clung in pride
Holding his place,
Holding his wings wide.
He was a brother to the birds you see
On state house domes above the cliff and hill,
Gilded, wide-winged, and still;
Brother of that great bird that screams and soars
For orators who shake the out of doors,
Disappearing in great freedom's sky
On Jefferson's birthday
And the Fourth of July.

EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

And now my pal and I,
Hiking through Montana's most tremendous wood,
Stopped laughing—for there the eagle stood.

THE SONG OF MY FIFTIETH BIRTHDAY

I

THE RIM ROCK

*[Rapidly, to the oldest, best known of all kettle-drum
marches, the human heart-beat]*

When our four bright years of adventure began,
We paced on the Davenport Roof, Spokane;
On the very dawn when the dream was strong,
We traced where the river and Rim Rock ran.

And we saw the Wild Flower City, Spokane,
Like The Jade Flower gardens of Kubla Khan,

Then saw it swirling, cheering, parading,
Swaggering, swarming, careering, rampaging,
Through centuries climbing, glittering, teeming,
And we whistled and danced this song, this song.

In the light, Spokane,
In the light, Spokane,
In the light,
In the light,
In the light, Spokane.

EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

Here, once, was a circular, crater-like bowl,
Lava that boiled like Niagara's soul.
But the Rim Rock is now like Nuremberg's wall,
A violoncello, an orchestra hall
That echoes with any man's free-hearted call.

With the Rim Rock august as the moon and the sun,
And dawns that are new while the zodiacs run,
We see the free city eternally one.

After long trips reconnoitering here
In a sky where genuine eagles are screaming,
A republic of news, and of dreams come true!
We saw TEN PLAGUES through the air disappear
Like the fumes of an assay, the breath of a steer,
As we paced on the Davenport Roof, Spokane,
And whistled and danced this song, this song.

No canned goods town! No mail order town!
And free from the boomer with drawing and plan!
A station gold-lacquered, its compasses span
Spheres too high for the faint-hearted few,
Curve over curve to the crystalline blue,
Where the Felts Field Flying men circle with pride,
Tip the moon aside,
With an uneven song, but a song.

EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

II

THE TEN PLAGUES

The Ten Special Plagues who rule other towns
All over the nation with telegraphed frowns,
Rule nevermore here, nor shoot from afar,
Nor come in an overstuffed annual car.

The Grendels called:—"Trickster," "Slick," "Sneer," and
"Huff,"

The Grendels called:—"Leer," "Simper," "Liar," and
"Bluff,"

The Grendel called "Fixer," who seldom is rough,
The Grendel called "Letter," all collar and cuff,
With a ciphered, invisible code on his shirt,
Maneuvering, plausible, staring and curt,
Rule nevermore here, in this crystal sphere,
Nor in all-steel cars appear.

No wire-tappers, telephone-listeners, spies,
Their own hot suspiciousness blasting their eyes,
Are sweating their deputies, studying mail,
Till the Power Trust hijackers come over the rail.

In the dark, Spokane,
In the dark, Spokane,
In the dark,
In the dark,
In the dark, Spokane.

EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

We have seen a few thwarted yes-men go by;
But a Terror is cracking the bones of the spy.
Perhaps Thomas Jefferson came to affright
While the night scenes whirled and the smoke-clouds curled,
And the scrolls of the future were there in the stars,
And the radios flashing from Sigma to Mars,
Perhaps Thomas Jefferson came in the night
And commanded to carry from Rim Rock to Mountain
The titanic Star Spangled Banner, unfurled.
They bend too low. They shrink, do not grow.
They groan with the burden. That flag-staff unseen
Is breaking their backs, while the dawn-winds clean
Destroy the capon, or shaman, or man
Who would rule or ruin reborn Spokane.

III

O'ER THE RAMPARTS WE WATCH

Sea-faring parrots, canaries from anywhere,
Robins from somewhere, larks from nowhere,
Down in the lobbies the rare birds sing
In cages of platinum, silver, and gold.
All the brave corridors rustle and ring
With a high-plumed genius, a tale untold.

We two, once again on the glittering roof,
Above the lobbies that all night zoom,
Above the marbles, the fountain room,

EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

And the Phi Beta Kappas, Moose, Rosarians,
Lions, Optimists, Elks, Rotarians,
Above toy gardens of hide and seek,
Above Honolulu ferns and fronds,
Above the gold fish streams and ponds,
Above Northwestern Luxury Gods,
Above the pits where the stoker plods,
We are drinking frost-air, tiptoe on the roof,
And we put the whole Northwest to the proof.
While the Felts Field Vikings circle with pride,
Tip the moon aside,
With an uneven song, but a song.

On our way to Springfield's intimate gleaming,
On our way to that twilight town, grown bold
With religions and saints and shrines untold,
The home of our love, and of Lincoln's dreaming.
With hearts in our birth land, The Middle West,
Approving mountains in pine trees dressed,
And millennial forests with apple-flowers streaming,
And clouds coming over the Rim Rock edge
With ruby, jasper, and sardonyx blazing and beaming,
We whistle and dance this song, this song.
We proclaim from 'The Davenport Roof, Spokane:—
"This backwoods is good as a Samurai clan."

A Denver, born without brag or bloke,
A Pittsburgh born without slag or coke.
This tank-town will never see ox teams again,
This one night stand is making big men.

EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

Where Washington cuts across Main, Spokane,
The streets have a sheen, like the past of Japan!
And Howard and Riverside, dizzy and fair!
Great Northern engines, hippogriffs whistling,
With jacinth and beryl bristling, preening,
And Spokane Falls, and the foam in the air
Make mating dragons, a crapulent pair.

Dawn breaks the chains, once more, for the world!
We hear the thrones down to darkness hurled.
O'er the ramparts we watch, from this roof and no other
With pearl and with jade and with chrysoprase beaming,
With blood and with snow and with azure gleaming,
The DAWN is a WORD, making heaven our brother,
Dawn is The Star Spangled Banner unfurled.

IV

THE SUN-UP DANCE

While the Grendels renounce us in far off fens,
Rule us no more with their fountain pens,
Quit pulping these forests, snouting these streams,
Choking these schools, wrecking these dreams,
This Inland Crater that prayed for rain
Has treasure tides like the Spanish Main;
This cow town, so far from the shore, sets free
Portents from deep in the Singapore sea.
This hick-town forgotten, this Indian Camp,
This Grubstake, has dug up Aladdin's lamp.



EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

Are we self-deceived? We have long believed
Only the aged are self-deceived.
And we whistle and dance this song, this song.
The East is a flag with the flag-staff unseen,
The midnight storm has washed the world clean.
And we dance the United States language at dawn
And our thoughts in a storm follow on, follow on.

We race on The Davenport Roof, Spokane:
Like the free old west is our sun-up dance,
Covered Wagon thoughts emerge and advance.
We write on the air like bathers that fly,
We are super-flying machines high-raring,
Locomotive griffins taking the sky,
Dragons with buffalo heads roaring by,
Or Coeur d'Alene Sachems with feathers on high.

V

THOMAS JEFFERSON RULES

No empires, flunkeys, or crowns began
When Jefferson's arm reached the river Spokane:
Jefferson saw it the River of Man.

While the heterodox Star Spangled Banner is streaming
We dance the red carmagnole of our seeking,
For the two are one in our patriot daring;
While the Felts Field Vikings circle with pride,
Tip the moon aside
With an uneven song, but a song.

EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

We, passers-by, look the place in the eye.
Not in Jefferson's town are artists run out,
Actors run out, musicians run out,
Novelists out, architects out,
Philosophers, painters, and sculptors run out;
Gardeners, scholars, or poets run out,
Oftener starved by whisper than shout.

No boys are poisoned with lies like drugs
For not esteeming the bluffs and thugs.
No ten crowned cormorants sit on the nest.
Jefferson rules, northwest of the West.

VI

A PERILOUS WHISPER

Unabashed and obscene as boys of sixteen,
From high on the snow-line where all winds fan,
They march in rose-vision for you, Spokane!
Lumberjacks, knee-deep in creaming snow,
March on the world in a gaudy glow.
Lumberjacks, dollarless, singing and young,
Do their best with the words that our forefathers sung,
Lumberjack armies, whose meaning is plain,
Are shouting "Your empire, like Caesar's, is vain."
Take Washington Street in the name of the trees,
Main Street they know like the snows and the seas.

EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

If one boy limps alone, his whisper can kill
All the ages devise of corruption and ill.
O lost Hamiltonians, far away,
The Tory party has seen its day!
O Doges of Wall Street, fallen and glum,
You knew a perilous whisper would come,
The Grendels were fools, were they fifty or ten:
One poet can laugh off a million old men.
One "Open Sesame" opens all caves,
Digs up your secrets from sacrosanct graves.

Not all of your star-chamber sessions could drown
One lumberjack marcher who questioned a crown,
Or send over Bridges of Sighs without trial
With charges unproved, with detectives most vile,
One Red Man, thinking, one dancer of light,
One twelve-year-old who would fight,
In a new town whose rim is like Nuremberg's wall
That echoes with any boy's free-hearted call,
One eaglet who screams "These are Liberty's hills,
"With dew and with snow and with daisies gleaming!"

VII

SACAJAWEA AND CHIEF JOSEPH

We hunt from the world all ridiculous scheming
Possessing the thought-giving roof of Spokane.
We two are the boomers with drawing and plan.
Hail, hail to the Jefferson country! He wrought

EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

In this Ultima Thule for souls unbought,
Sent men like Lewis and Clark to find
These quenched volcanoes, these rivers kind.
And their new Pocahontas, the young forest mother,
The bird-woman guide, the scout through the dark,
Sacajawea, the world her brother,
Was more worth finding than all the wide park.

In the dark, Spokane,
In the dark, Spokane,
In the dark,
In the dark,
In the dark, Spokane.

And we dance her praises, in dawn-stars dressed,
Daisies, spangles, and wings like the lark.

Again a blood-red Indian we praise,
The Northwest-soul in its war-swept days:
By powers beyond dream or thought he stays,
Cloud-tearing Chief Joseph controls your ways,
That mountain, all granite, past master of fame,
When years are unsparing and time is a name.
In the light, Spokane,
In the light, Spokane.

Yes, this is adventurous Washington's west;
This is reckless Jefferson's west,
They would wipe from the earth every arrogant town,

EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

Wipe from the earth every caste system town,
Every cabal-ruled town, every martinet town,
Every landlord town, every closed door town,
Every secret committee, Tory town,
And the Felts Field Vikings circle with pride,
Tip the moon aside
With an uneven song, but a song,
In the light, Spokane,
In the light, Spokane.

VIII

THE HEART-BEAT

[*Much more softly and slowly, to the same drums*]
Such is the power of one birdling or fawn,
Such is the spell of one whisper at dawn,
Unless Penitentiary Silence is here,
Absentee landlords are leprous and drear.

In this City, History is present as faith.
From Vikings to Red Men, the compasses span.
The Scout is no longer a desperate wraith;
And Poetry, Beauty, Talent, and Hope
Have learned that their whisper hangs hangman and rope.
In Spokane, where Glory and Talent and Fire
And God and Democracy have their desire:—

Their desire, that goes marching with each April breath
To the drum of heartbeats stronger than death,

EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

In the light, Spokane,
In the light, Spokane,
In the light,
In the light,
In the light, Spokane.

So set not this dance to musical scales,
Nor to orchestra strings, but to Felts Field sails,
Arrogant striplings, there in the sky,
And the dawn-born Star Spangled Banner on high.

Let the wings of your heart beat low in your ears,
Set the lilt of this dance to your secret tears.

Hark to your breast with its quick broken drums
Before the floats gleam, or the band-wagon comes.

Hear the half-music the uneven heart makes
Deep in bright years, before it breaks.

In the light, Spokane,
In the light, Spokane,
In the light,
In the light,
In the light, Spokane.

TWENTY YEARS AGO

To the Right Honorable The Earl of Chesterfield:—

(When, upon some slight encouragement, I first visited your Lordship, I was overpowered, like the rest of mankind, by the enchantment of your address, etc. . . . but)

I

You call me "a Troubadour,"

But I am an adventurer, in hieroglyphics, buildings, and designs.

When I was eight years old, I had two hundred building blocks,

Given to me by The Reverend Fred H. Wines.

And I gave them to his grandson, in due time afterward,

Remembering I had made out of them,

A Springfield built of silver blocks, and towers and vines
and valentines,

And a paper doll with a paper diadem.

A Sangamon palace of the soul,

With the American flag upon a fishing pole.

And kite lines rose to dizzy heights, and underneath were
caves and mines and coal,

And those who came to view the sights paid five cornelian
marbles for the toll.

EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

II

With insulting volubility, eyebrow-lift and leer,
You label me a "Sonneteer," but still I claim my liberty,
Your advertisements weigh me not in chains.
I am going to be a printer like old William Morris,
I am going to put a strain on all your brains.
I choose to be a Mayor, like old Tom Johnson, if I have to
run for
Mayor of Loami.
I choose to be an etcher studying James M. Whistler.
You say I am a rhymmer, but who am I?
Your silly big-timer, to do a turn for you?
Your Tom Thumb in the side show to make talk?
I tell you, Lord Chesterfield, I'm no man's baby wonder.
I will go and harvest wheat in Kansas thunder,
I will go and feed the red corn to the stock.
Perhaps, Lord Chesterfield, the next time you meet me
You will find me building watches on Mount Blanc?
I claim the right to make the worst watches you can shake
It is better than to die drowned in a tank
Of advertising ink, so thick no fish could think,
A grave that is no grave it is so rank.

III

I have loved, for instance, Whistler, and Jimmy's gentle
book,
As an art student, years and years ago.

EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

There are days when Whistler's dog-whip is the one lash in
the world

There are days when his long cane is all I know.

Then all men are my enemies except my oldest enemies,
Who knew me in Springfield when a child.

They do not read my books, but O they have read me,
An egotist by no means mild,

Who would throw the seas away to have but one more day
Of his own whims and fantasy and pomp.

In Springfield this is better than the Pyramids to men
Who have learned how to scrap and to romp.

We were plain with each other, with Sangamon River calm;
we laid on the lash long ago.

They are right. I am no poet, but they know my lifetime
style,

And give me all the liberty I know.

IV

If I should land in Springfield, tomorrow morning early,

With blue-prints for a zebra farm and track,

Proposing zebra races, no Springfield Citizen

Would turn a hair, nor like you, turn his back.

If I came with Spanish books for the Illinois State Library
From Mexico City or Madrid,

They would not insult me as you have insulted me.

They would not insist the books be hid.

If I should come with cages of Spokane canaries

And hang them up in front of every store,

The Springfield Citizen would laugh and spit and swear,

EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

But he would not take the birds down from the door.
He might yap and squint and blah blah, but would let me
 have my way,
Like old Samuel Johnson would stand pat.
You fill me full of food, you think you are not rude:
You will not let me have my way like that.
If I should print new drawings in The Illinois State Register,
They would not gabble "pen stroke," "swirl" or "passion."
They would merely grunt "Again?" like honest, blunt
 he-men,
Would not assume to call me not in fashion.
If I take old Springfield, after years of absence
With freight cars full of some new Burbank's breed,
Cyclops oak-trees that grow faster than Australian Eucalyptus,
Golden rain-trees that scatter honey-seed,
Trees hardy as the north-pole tabby cat;
If I should plant my gift, in circles round the city
Till they sheltered and shadowed every flat,
They would not cut down the trees. They would leave me
 at my ease.
You will not let me have my way like that.

V

I do not take on friends who tinker with my liberty,
No matter how they boot-lick or beguile.
O foolish Lord Chesterfield, you ask me for one drawing
With your tongue in your cheek all the while.

EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

You would sweat me for one sonnet, then paste your label
on it

Like a druggist who has standardized a drug,
My works are unstandardized, and not Peruna-advertised,
O sweat me not for trinkets with a shrug.

And I know you still are silent on those Springfield Zebra
races.

I hope you keep on sweating till you're flat.

With two Merchants of Cathay, brothers in roundelay,
I will put them on before you can say "scat,"

And you will fade all dazy if you find they're there to stay,
"You will not let me have my way like that?"

O you want a cutie epic, yet you want no naughty song,
It must be a sonnet—fourteen-count-'em long.

You want a poem operated on.

An end-page ornament, of the purest prig descent,
Not Venus-kissed, with reputation gone.

Therefore one Manhattan luncheon, one long afternoon of
flattery,

Exhausting your word-battery.

And then I am to sit in my cell for seven years,
Till with seven cents and seven glycerine tears,
Your third assistant janitor appears.

VI

You call me a Troubadour,

But I am an adventurer, in hieroglyphics, buildings and
designs.

EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

When I was eight years old I had two hundred building
blocks

Given to me by The Reverend Fred H. Wines.

And I gave them to his grandson, in due time afterward,

Remembering I had made out of them

A Springfield built of silver blocks, and towers and vines and
valentines,

And kite-lines rose to dizzy heights, and underneath were
caves and mines and coal,

And those who came to view the sights paid five cornelian
marbles for the toll.

VII

The music of that iron word "Reconciliation"

Calls me back to the Springfield voting-booth,

To the Springfield Elections, as funny as Mark Twain,

And sometimes free and beautiful as Youth.

We will elect a mayor, we will elect a president,

We did it twice, could do it any time.

And I say that this outshines your Main Street Magazine;

I reject your little market for a rhyme.

The music of that soul's word "Reconciliation,"

Will roll me back to Springfield after while,

And three or more will sit with me in the Leland music room,

And we will free Old Ireland in Style.

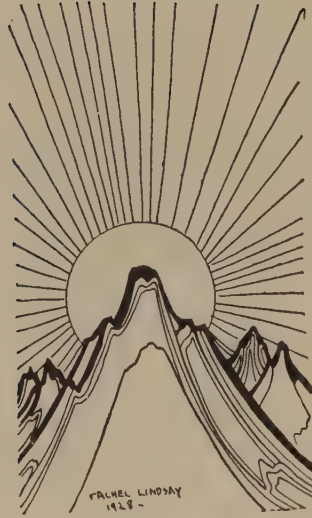
Yes, I will go back to that heartbreak that is home

And scrawl my work, if need be, on the fence

Of folks who are not worried if I do not fit their pattern,

EVERY SOUL IS A CIRCUS

Long reconciled to my born lack of sense.
In Springfield, that iron word "Reconciliation"
Will bring me back, will break my heart of stone,
And Protestant and Catholic, Jew and Unbeliever
Will bear me back to Love, and to my own.
And I will pray to Mary, and to the Sacred Heart
In "The Church of Peter and Paul"
And watch the aged saints do the stations of the cross
And hear the great saints of tomorrow call.



THE FIVE SEALS IN THE SKY

I

SUNRISE

The daybreak flames as a picture for the birds,
They feast in the grass, then fly with tiny words.
The sunrise girds and harnesses the herds,
And comes
A sky-picture
For men, for men.

For the first ray stays throughout the stormy day
Deep in the breast, though the bramble bushes flay,
To the sea, west-way, we walk the morning ray.
The dawn-path
Is a picture
For men, for men.



II

THE WAR-PATH

The spring-plumes flare, on the heads of bulls and birds.
They fight, they die, with ancient forest words.
The war-plumes come, up the road with gun and drum.
They come.
A sky-picture,
For men, for men.
For the soul makes war, when the head is bent and grey.
The gun-fights end, with glory or with pay.
No soul wars cease, though the body be at peace.
And plumes are
Sky-pictures
For men, for men.

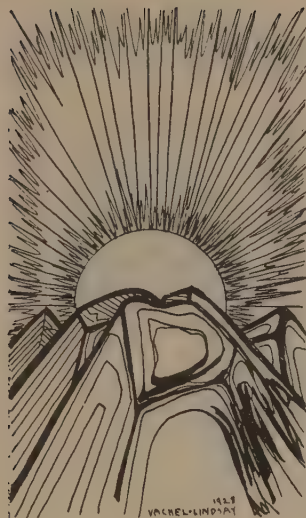


III

THE BOOK-PATH

The leaves of the trees are books to wolves and birds.
The boughs whirr there to make new forest words.
And good books fly or run up to the sun.
And the books
Reconnoiter
For men, for men.

For book-thoughts stay from May on round to May.
We read on high, though grizzlies block the way,
And The Doomsday Book opens up in Heaven's day.
The book-path
Is a picture
For men, for men.

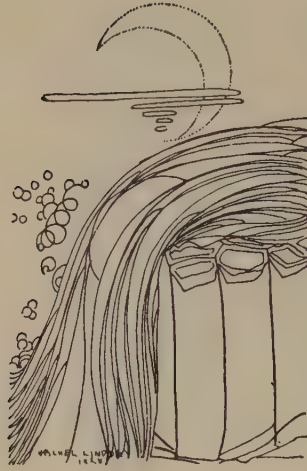


IV

SUNSET

Into the sunset, moths or wild cranes fly.
On through the sunset all the highways lie.
The last light flares like a window on the stairs.
It comes
A sky-picture
For men, for men.

For the evenings' stay through childhood's livelong day.
We sleep all night yet sing the sunset lay.
The west-way sun is the playwright of our play;
The Shakespeare
Of heaven
For men, for men.



V

THE MOON-PATH

When the moon hangs low, a crescent by a stream,
The waterfall sleeps, we dream a holy dream,
Moon-tides turn, night rainbows swirl and burn.

Sea-pictures

For land-birds,

For men, for men.

For, in swift sea-wind, old voyages sweep by,
Our own sure ships are launching there on high.

One more marked way the feet of men obey.

The moon-path

Is a picture

For men, for men.

And so we conclude our discussion of The Deep Woods Mysteries and the most solemn part of the Forest Menagerie, and that Sawdust Ring which is in the deepest of the deep woods.

